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Outline

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Part One The Life of **BOSTON UNIVERSITY** Ideas of
George Gissing

GRADUATE SCHOOL

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autobiographical

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B- His boyhood

1- Born at Wakefield, November 23, 1857

1

2- Attended Hindon Grove Quaker boarding school

2

3- Went to Owens College in 1872

3

THESIS

ELEMENTS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN GEORGE GISSING'S FICTION

by

Gladys Binns Stork
(B.S., Boston University, 1932)

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

1934

3- Went straight to America

3

4- Sold a few newspaper articles in Boston

4

5- Taught in Waltham High School

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6- Contemplated suicide at Niagara

6

7- Went to Chicago

7

a) sold short stories to the Chicago Tribune

7

8- Returned to Troy, New York

7

a) unable to secure newspaper work

7

b) near starvation

7

c) Became a gas fitter for short time

7

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Summary

Part One The Life, Ideas, and Personal Characteristics

"There is no writer of fiction, that I know of, whose works are fuller of autobiographical material than are those of my father, or whose characters throw more light upon the various aspects of their author's mind," says the son of George Gissing.¹ It is true that through his books one sees the life of the author faintly covered by the lives of fictitious people. However, it is easy to confuse the imaginative with the autobiographical material, and since whatever there is of autobiography is not centered in one person, but is often discoverable in the most diverse places, there can be no greater mistake made than to attribute at random to the author himself ideas, circumstances, or personal characteristics which in all possibility might prove to attach themselves exclusively to the personages of his stories. Therefore, I shall give what details in his life, personal characteristics, and ideas are available from authentic sources in an attempt to show from the selections and references gathered in Part Two, after a careful reading of his fiction, to what extent his works may be said to be autobiographical.

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1. Selections from the Works of George Gissing, p. 17, by Alfred Charles Gissing (Jonathan Cape, London, 1929)

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Mr. H. G. Wells says of George's father that he "was in a double sense the cardinal formative influence in his life. The tones of his father's voice, his father's gestures, never departed from him; when he read aloud, particularly if it was poetry he read, his father returned in him."¹ It is difficult to know anything about his early years, although it may be said that his interest in books began at the age of ten when he read The Old Curiosity Shop.³ "His father's well-stocked library and his encouragement quickened his imagination," continues Mr. Wells, "and gave it its enduring bias for literary activity. He could draw in those days with skill and vigor-- it will seem significant to many that he was particularly fascinated by Hogarth's work, and that he copied it and imitated it."² In his childhood letters to members of his family, which disclose an intelligence and ability far beyond his years, he tells of vacations spent at the seaside, of trips to Wales, of gathering shells, and of sketching nature.⁴ He went to a School of Art at night, and he tells of receiving a shilling for carrying a basket of pears to a neighbor's, "and this of course went to my paints."⁵ "George," his sister said, "had a passion for learning. He would rush off to school with a sharp herring bone in his throat for fear of missing his lesson. He would copy out from a little book called That's It the astonishing number of eggs that the tench, the sole, and the carp lay 'because I think it is a fact worthy of attention.'"⁶

1. George Gissing, by H.G. Wells, "Monthly Review" August 1904

2. Ibid

3. George Gissing, A Critical Study, p. 22, by Frank Swinnerton
(Doran, New York, 1923)

4. Letters of George Gissing, p. 1,2,3, (Houghton Mifflin Co.

5. Letters of George Gissing, p.8 Boston & New York, 1927)

6. Letters of George Gissing, P.403 " "

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1. George Glasning, by H. G. Wells, "Monthly Review" August 1904.
2. Ibid.
3. George Glasning, A Critical Study, p. 38, by Frank Swinerton (Doran, New York, 1923).
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When the boy was thirteen, and after the death of his father, he went to the Lindow Grove Quaker boarding school at Alderley Edge, which, though socially unpretentious, was a good one. Gissing, whose imagination may have been quickened by his father's recent death in 1870, and by a knowledge of the effort his education cost, made the most of his opportunities with an almost exaggerated intensity. He joined in the school games as little as possible--although a class-mate says he played hockey with "madness and vigour." He walked much alone, reading as he went. Only on occasional "violent bouts of tilting" did he take part, and in the Greek, French, or English plays performed on the half yearly speech nights did he show great interest." He was at one and the same time stage builder, stage manager, instructor, leading actor, and prompter as well as our chief reciter,"¹ says a school fellow. Otherwise, he shunned companionship, devoted his time to his books, and developed his passion for Greece and Italy, which was later to be increased by his purchase of Gibbon.² In the Ryecroft Papers he says: "I found a pleasure in getting up and escaping from the dormitory whilst all the others were asleep. My purpose was innocent enough, I got up early only to do my lessons. I can see the long school room lighted by the early sun; I can smell the school room odour--a blend of books and slates and wall maps and I know not what. It was a mental peculiarity of mine that at five o'clock in the morning I could apply myself with gusto to mathematics, a subject loathesome to me at any other time of the day. Opening the book at some sec-

1. H. G. Wells "Monthly Review", August, 1904

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tion which was wont to scare me, I used to say to myself: 'Come now, I'm going to tackle this this morning! If other boys can understand it, why shouldn't I?' And in a measure I succeeded. In a measure only; there was always a limit at which my powers failed me, strive as I would."³ From this same source we are acquainted with his hate of military training and impatience of control: "At school we used to be 'drilled' in the play ground once a week. I have but to think of it, even after forty years, and there comes back upon me that tremor of passionate misery, which, at the time, often made me ill. The senseless routine of mechanic exercise was in itself all but unendurable to me; I hated the standing in line, the thrusting out of arms and legs at a signal, the thud of feet stamping in constrained unison. The loss of individuality seemed to me sheer disgrace. And when, as often happened, the drill-sergeant rebuked me for some inefficiency as I stood in line, when he addressed me as 'Number Seven!' I burned with shame and rage. I was no longer a human being, I had become part of a machine, and my name was 'Number Seven.'

2. "At the little shop near Portland Road Station I came upon a first edition of Gibbon, the price an absurdity-- I think it was a shilling a volume. To possess those clean paged quantas I would have sold my coat. As it happened, I had not money enough with me, but sufficient at home. I was living at Islington. Having spoken with the bookseller, I walked home, took the cash, walked back again, and-- carried the tomes from the west end of Euston Road to a street in Islington far beyond the Angel. I did it in two journeys--this being the only time in my life when I thought of Gibbon in avoirdupois. Of the season and weather I have no recollection; my joy in the purchase I had made drove out every other thought, and the end of the last journey saw me upon a chair, perspiring, flaccid, aching--exultant'."

(The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, P. 40, by George Gissing (E. P. Dutton & Co. New York))

3. The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, p. 109

tion which was wont to scare me, I used to say to myself: 'Come now, I'm going to tackle this this morning! If other boys can understand it, why shouldn't I?' And in a measure I succeeded. In a measure only; there was always a limit at which my powers failed me, arrive as I would." From this same source we are acquainted with his hate of military training and impatience of control: "At school we used to be 'drilled' in the play ground once a week. I have not to think of it, even after forty years, and there comes back upon me that tremor of passionate misery, which, at the time, often made me ill. The senseless routine of mechanic exercise was in itself all but unendurable to me; I hated the standing in line, the thrusting out of arms and legs at a signal, the thud of feet stamping in constrained unison. The loss of individuality seemed to me sheer disgrace. And when, as often happened, the drill-sergeant rebuked me for some inefficiency as I stood in line, when he addressed me as 'Number Seven!' I burned with shame and rage. I was no longer a human being, I had become part of a machine, and my name was 'Number Seven'."

3. "At the little shop near Portland Road Station I came upon a first edition of Gibbon, the price an absurdity--I think it was a shilling a volume. To possess those clean paced quanta I would have sold my coat. As it happened, I had not money enough with me, but sufficient at home. I was living at Lillingston. Having spoken with the bookseller, I walked home, took the cash, walked back again, and--carried the tomes from the west end of Euston Road to a street in Lillingston far beyond the Angel. I did it in two journeys--this being the only time in my life when I thought of Gibbon in avoirdupois. Of the season and weather I have no recollection; my joy in the purchase I had made drove out every other thought, and the end of the last journey saw me upon a chair, per-
appling, flaccid, sobbing--exultant."
(The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, p. 40, by George Gissing (E. P. Dutton & Co. New York))

.....I think I never hated man as I hated that broad-shouldered, hard-visaged, brassy-voiced fellow. Every word he spoke to me I felt as an insult. Seeing him in the distance, I have turned and fled, to escape the necessity of saluting, and, still more, a quiver of the nerves which affected me so painfully. If ever a man did me harm, it was he; harm physical and moral. In all seriousness I believe that something of the nervous instability which I have suffered since boyhood is traceable to those accursed hours of drill, and I am very sure that I can date from the same wretched moments a fierceness of personal pride which has been one of my most troublesome characteristics."¹

Before he was fifteen he won the junior exhibition (involving free tuition for three sessions) granted by Owens College, Manchester, to the candidate most distinguished in the Oxford and Cambridge Local Examination. He continued to work "insanely" at college, winning many prizes, working while he ate, cutting down his sleep, and temporarily impairing his health. At eighteen and a half years old he says in a letter that he wishes he could relive that last two or three years and make better use of his time.²

translating and wishing to publish *Heine*.³ For a time he wrote newspaper articles, and then he taught classics (a period which he enjoyed) in a Waltham High School.⁴ Going to Chicago he succeeded in getting some short stories published in the *Chicago Tribune*,⁵ but while there he came very near to starvation.

1. *English Literature During The Last Half Century*, p. 99
by J. W. Cunliffe (Macmillan Co. 1919, New York)

1. Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, p. 57
2. Letters of George Gissing p. 12

3. Letters of George Gissing p. 52

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Before he was nineteen or had taken his degree, he formed a connection with a woman of the town; which ruined his whole life. This was a result of defects in character rare in combination with his scholarly qualities. "He had a strongly developed sexual nature and strange weakness of judgment, and with that peculiar mixture of idealism and sensuality characteristic of him, he married her."¹ Finding himself in financial straits owing to her demands upon him, he was driven to stealing from his fellow students. Caught in the act by a detective who was set to watch, he was imprisoned, and his academic career came to an end. He felt he was now unfit for society. This sense of unfitness, which is seen all through his books, he was fully aware of. In the Ryecroft Papers he says: "Something obviously I lacked from the beginning, some balancing principle granted to most men in one or another degree. I had brains but they were no help to me in the common circumstances of life."²

After a brief period of clerkship at Liverpool, urged by his friends, he crossed steerage to America. While looking for a position on a periodical staff he studied a good deal of German, translating and wishing to publish Heine.³ For a time he wrote newspaper articles, and then he taught classics (a period which he enjoyed) in a Waltham High School.⁴ Going to Chicago he succeeded in getting some short stories published in the Chicago Tribune,⁵ but while there he came very near to starvation.

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2. Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, P.168

3. Letters of George Gissing, p.14

4. Ibid. p.19

5. Letters of George Gissing p.58

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3. Letters of George Gissing, p. 14

4. Ibid. p. 19

5. Letters of George Gissing p. 58

The piracy of one of his stories by a paper published in Troy, New York, led him to seek his fortune there, but he had no success. Almost utterly destitute he lived for days on peanuts and in the basest of lodgings. It was then that a kind old man whom he found in a lawyer's office reading a Bible during his dinner hour, recommended him to a man needing an assistant. And thus Gissing, for a short time only, worked as a gas fitter; for it seemed, he proved to be not sufficiently "practical". At Niagara he came near to committing suicide.

Intolerably homesick he returned to Europe--to Germany. At Jena, he studied Goethe, Haeckel, and Schopenhauer whose extreme pessimism influenced him. His reading was directed to Positivism and the works of Comte, a very significant fact in relation to the character of his early books. We read later in his Letters that he attended meetings of the Positivists' Society in London.¹ While at Jena he made the acquaintance of Edward Bertz, and they remained life-long friends and correspondents.

Filled with new ideas Gissing returned to London at the close of 1878; and entering upon another and longer period of struggle and poverty, he wrote his brother William, whose encouragement and sympathy Gissing dearly prized, that while looking for a permanent position he was preparing a boy for B.A. candidate,² and was hoping to get a German translation published. Sending for his Greek book he again took up its study seriously, remarking that the Greeks were vastly influencing the literary artists of the present.³

1. Letters of George Gissing p. 90
2. " " " " " p. 26
3. " " " " " p. 38

The piracy of one of his stories by a paper published in Troy, New York, led him to seek his fortune there, but he had no success. Almost utterly destitute he lived for days on pennies and in the barest of lodgings. It was then that a kind old man whom he found in a lawyer's office reading a Bible during his dinner hour, recommended him to a man needing an assistant. And thus Giesing, for a short time only, worked as a gas fitter; for it seemed, he proved to be not sufficiently "practical". At Niagara he came near to committing suicide.

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1. Letters of George Giesing
2. p. 28
3. p. 28

At the same time he urged his brothers and sisters to continue and enlarge their studies conscientiously. He was convinced at this period that to ensure the enlightenment of the next generation the State Church should be destroyed, and free libraries established;¹ that public holidays should be abolished, and the working day be made only three or four hours long-- against man's making work an end, instead of a means;² and that in looking forward to the day when something of the civic spirit of old Greece should animate one and all of our towns, when men would recognize their towns as individual members of the alliance of towns which make up a nation, there would be one clearly defined center of intellectual life.³

Having decided to write novels, he sent his brother his purpose: "I mean to bring home to people the ghastly condition (material, mental, moral) of our poor classes, to show the hideous injustice of our whole system of society, to give light upon the plan of altering it, and above all, to preach an enthusiasm for just and high ideals in this age of unmitigated egotism and 'shop.' I shall never write a book which does not keep all these ends in view."⁴ He had previously given lectures on the subject of rationalism, one of which aroused great enthusiasm in the audience.⁵ He despised politics; distrusted the press, particularly literary critics; loathed industrialism and war;⁶ and had few hopes of education.⁷

1. Letters of George Gissing p. 43
2. " " " " p. 116
3. " " " " p. 91
4. " " " " p. 83
5. " " " " p. 40
6. " " " " p. 56
7. Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft p. 70

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1.	Letters of George Gissing	p. 43
2.	"	"
3.	"	"
4.	"	"
5.	"	"
6.	"	"
7.	Private Papers of Henry Russell	p. 70

It is during this period of his life, says Mr. Austin Harrison, to which those often described sufferings must be confined.¹ At this time he made acquaintance with the garret, and later with the cellar. "There was a difference, if I remember rightly, of sixpence, a week, " he says in the Ryecroft Papers,"and sixpence, in those days, was a very great consideration--why, it meant a couple of meals. The front cellar was stone-floored; its furniture was a table, a chair, a washstand, and a bed; the window, which of course had never been cleaned since it was put in, received light through a flat grating in the alley above. Here I lived; here I wrote."² Another characteristic picture of this period from the Ryecroft Papers: "I think of fogs in London, fogs of murky yellow or of sheer black, such as have often made all work impossible to me, and held me, a sort of dyspeptic owl, in moping and blinking idleness. On such a day, I remember, I once found myself at an end both of coal and of lamp-oil, with no money to purchase either; all I could do was to go to bed, meaning to lie there till the sky once more became visible. But a second day found the fog dense as ever. I rose in darkness; I stood at the window of my garret, and saw that the street was illumined as at night, lamps and shop-fronts perfectly visible, with folk going about their business. The fog, in fact, had risen, but still hung above the house-tops, impermeable by any heavenly beam. My solitude being no longer endurable, I went out, and walked the town for hours. When I returned, it was with a few coins which permitted me to buy warmth and light. I had sold to a second-

1. Austin Harrison, "Nineteenth Century", September, 1906

2. The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, p. 28

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hand bookseller a volume which I prized, and was so much the poorer for the money in my pocket."¹

Here he tasted the poor man's joys in pease-pudding ("Magnificent pennyworth's at a shop in Cleveland Street, of a very rich quality indeed," he tells us),² as well as "excellent faggots." Here he worked as severely as ever, both teaching and writing, but principally reading classical authors at the Museum, and studying Italian, and grudging time spent away from them. His "teaching was mostly a matter of coaching," and he tells in the Ryecroft Papers how he got up regularly at five-thirty for a year. "I had undertaken to 'coach' a man for the London matriculation; he was in business, and the only time he could conveniently give to his studies was before breakfast. I, just then, had my lodgings near Hampstead Road; my pupil lived at Knightsbridge; I engaged to be with him every morning at half-past six, and the walk, at a brisk pace, took me just about an hour. At that time I saw no severity in the arrangement, and I was delighted to earn the modest fee which enabled me to write all day long without fear of hunger; but one inconvenience attached to it, I had no watch, and my only means of knowing the time was to hear the striking of a clock in the neighborhood. As a rule, I awoke just when I should have done; the clock struck five, and up I sprang. But occasionally--and this when the mornings had grown dark--my punctual habit failed me. I would hear the clock chime some fraction of the hour, and could not know whether I had awoke too soon or slept too long. The horror of unpunctuality, which has always been a craze with me, made it

1. The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, p.232

2. New Grub Street p. 225 (Modern Library, 1926, New York)

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1. The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, p. 232.
2. New York Street, p. 328 (Modern Library, 1938, New York).

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"It happened now and then that, on reaching the house at Knightsbridge, I was informed that Mr.--- felt too tired to rise. This concerned me little, for it meant no deduction of fee; I had the two hour's walk, and was all the better for it. Then the appetite with which I sat down to breakfast, whether I had done my coaching or not! Bread and butter and coffee--such coffee!--made the meal, and I ate like a navvy. I was in magnificent spirits. All the way home I had been thinking of my day's work, and the morning brain, clarified and whipped to vigour by that brisk exercise, by that wholesome hunger, wrought its best. The last mouthful swallowed, I was seated at my writing table; aye, and there I sat for seven or eight hours, with a short munching interval, working as only few men worked in all London, with pleasure, zeal, hope."¹

The above is an unusually pleasant picture of Gissing; mostly during this period he speaks in a sadder vein, of days during which he could not write a word, of meals made on lentils until his brother despaired of the damage these "strengthless weeds" were doing his health. And during all this time he contributed a small weekly sum--between two and three dollars--to his wife's support. She had continued her career of vice and drunkenness until it was brought to an end by her death.

1. Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, pages 109, 110, 111

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He had only one friend, Morley Roberts, an author like himself, whom he saw at rare intervals. "He chose to live fiercely independent," says Austin Harrison, "Proud and resentful, at war with the whole social organism; for years he was a sort of literary miser, spurning mankind, scorning sympathy; still, his was one of the kindest, gentlest natures that ever breathed, with his soul bared to the lash of circumstances. Fate made him a ferocious individualist. The world frightened him."¹

The novel on which he was writing was not going well, he felt unequal to the effort, due, he thought, to the unsettled political situation in which he was interested.² The novel, finally finished, he could not get published.

Long rambles and prowlings about London showed him the seamy outdoor side of the poor life of which he wrote, and gave him sore throats. Forced by poverty to write, he who had in him the making of a scholar, who with leisure and tranquillity of mind should have amassed learning and acquired happiness if he had lived within the walls of a college, as he tells us in Ryecroft,³ chose as his subjects and background those he found around him in his garret days. The impressive part of Gissing is that knowing them as he did, he made no secret of the fact he hated them, or of his opinion of them: "I am no friend of the people. As a force, by which the tenor of the time is conditioned, they inspire me with distrust, with fear; as a visible multitude, they make me shrink aloof, and often move to abhorrence. For the greater part of my life, the people signified

1. Nineteenth Century by Austin Harrison September 1906
2. Letters of George Gissing pages 27, 156
3. Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft p. 13

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1. Nineteenth Century by Austin Harrison September 1906
2. Letters of George Gissing pages 87, 126
3. Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft p. 13

to me the London crowd, and no phrase of temperate meaning would utter my thoughts of them under that aspect. The people as country-folk are little known to me; such glimpses as I have had of them do not invite to nearer acquaintance. Every instinct of my being is anti-democratic, and I dread to think of what our England may become when Demos rules irresistibly."

".....Take a man by himself, and there is generally some reason to be found in him, some disposition for good; mass him with his fellows in the social organism; and ten to one he becomes a blatant creature, sans a thought of his own, ready for any evil to which contagion prompts him. It is because nations tend to stupidity and baseness that mankind moves slowly; it is because individuals have a capacity for better things that it moves at all."¹

His first published novel, Workers in the Dawn, which was begun in 1879, he paid to have published with a legacy of five hundred dollars² after its decline by three publishers.³ To his brother he explained that "the reason it (Workers in the Dawn) is gloomy is because of the temperament, and the special mood in which it was written. If you knew much of my daily life you would wonder that I write at all, to say nothing of writing cheerfully. But in the book, I have, so to speak, written off a whole period of my existence. My next book will be different. I have passed beyond the stage at which it was possible for me to write such a book as Workers in the Dawn."⁴

Its sale was so small that he was again destitute. Only twenty-nine copies of it being sold,⁵ he was determined to give

1. Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, p.47
2. Letters of George Gissing, p. 58
3. " " " " p. 56
4. " " " " p. 72
5. " " " " p. 81

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1.	Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.	p. 47
2.	Letters of George Eliot.	p. 53
3.	"	p. 58
4.	"	p. 72
5.	"	p. 81

up writing when he received an offer to do a series of articles on English life, its political, social, and literary affairs, for Russia. He hated such work, but it came at a welcome time.¹

Copies of his book being sent to Mr. Frederick Harrison and to Lord Morley Roberts, both of them became interested, and the former engaged Gissing as a tutor to his two elder sons.² Through Mr. Harrison he received other pupils,³ whom he taught in the day time, while giving his "leisure hours" to writing and reading. Upon the publication of a short sketch, On Battersea Bridge in "The Pall Mall Gazette," he was entreated to write more, but he refused to do journalistic work. He "would not degrade himself by such trash!"⁴

From 1882 on Mr. Austin Harrison says Gissing had "a livable income derivable from teaching, which he could always modify or increase at will."⁵ Yet just after the publication of The Unclassed in 1884, he wrote to Mrs. Frederick Harrison: "A kind of exhaustion possesses me when I sit at my desk a quarter of an hour, and my will power gets weaker. At most I am able to produce a short poem now and then of a very savage character. Of course this means that the conditions of my life are preposterous. There is only one consolation, that, if I live through it, I shall have materials for a darker and stronger work than

1. Letters of George Gissing, p. 85, 118

2. " " " " p. 77

3. " " " " p. 88

4. " " " " p. 91

5. Nineteenth Century by Austin Harrison, September, 1906

The following, taken from a letter to his sister March 8, 1882, would seem to indicate that Harrison was correct: "My teaching work has extended fearfully of late. I have now ten pupils--some in little groups; and am taken up with teaching from nine in the morning till six at night."-- (Letters of George Gissing, p. 108)

no writing when he received an offer to do a series of articles on English life, its political, social, and literary affairs, for Russia. He hated such work, but it came at a welcome time.

Copies of his book being sent to Mr. Frederick Harrison and to Lord Morley Roberts, both of them became interested, and the

former engaged Gissing as a tutor to his two elder sons.

Through Mr. Harrison he received other pupils, whom he taught in the day time, while giving his "leisure hours" to writing and

reading. Upon the publication of a short sketch, On Battered

Bridge in "The Pall Mall Gazette," he was entreated to write

more, but he refused to do journalistic work. He "would not

degrade himself by such trash!"

From 1882 on Mr. Austin Harrison says Gissing had "a livable

income derivable from teaching, which he could always modify or

increase at will." Yet just after the publication of The Un-

classified in 1884, he wrote to Mrs. Frederick Harrison: "A kind

of exhaustion possesses me when I sit at my desk a quarter of

an hour, and my will power gets weaker. At most I am able to

produce a short poem now and then of a very savage character.

Of course this means that the conditions of my life are pre-

posterous. There is only one consolation, that, if I live through

it, I shall have materials for a darker and stronger work than

1. Letters of George Gissing, p. 88, 118

2. " " " " " " " " " " " "

3. " " " " " " " " " " " "

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our time has seen. If I can hold out until I have written some three or four books, I shall at all events have the satisfaction of knowing that I have left something too individual in tone to be neglected."¹

This despite a refusal to an offer of further work made by Mr. Harrison, saying that "almost a livelihood" was assured him for some months. Mr. Wells says: "It will be incredible to every level-minded reader, but, as a matter of fact, he maintained his fair appearance, he received his pupils in his apartment (a flat near Regent's Park), he toiled and wrote unceasingly, upon scarcely any food at all. Partly, no doubt, it was poverty: he grudged every moment taken for teaching from his literary purpose, and taught as little as he could; but mainly it was sheer inability to manage. His meals were of bread and dripping, stewed tea, cheese at times, soup bought desiccated in penny packets, and such like victual; and a common friend, himself no mean novelist, has described his entertainment there of a Sunday afternoon;-- Gissing with flushed face and shining eyes, declaiming Greek choruses and capping sonorous quotations--'There are miserable wretches,' he would say, 'who know not the difference between dochmiacs and antispasts! '--until hunger could wait no longer. Thereupon he would become spasmodically culinary in a swift anticlimax: 'Now for the squalid meal.'"²

Periods of far too intense literary activity would alternate with phases of exhaustion, characterized by loneliness, discomfort, and dyspepsia. There were quite tragic instances, books

1. "Nineteenth Century" (by Austin Harrison), September, 1906
2. Monthly Review by H.G. Wells, August 1904

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Gleaming with flushed face and shining eyes, declaiming Greek choruses and copying sonorous propositions--'There are miserable wretches,' he would say, 'who know not the difference between doomsday and anti-doomsday!--until hunger could wait no longer.

Thereupon he would become apologetically ordinary in a swift anti-climax: 'Now for the usual meal.'"

Periods of far too intense literary activity would alternate with phases of exhaustion, characterized by loneliness, discontent, and dyspepsia. There were quite tragic instances, books

begun and destroyed, great uninspired intervals across which the pen had to be driven grimly, insistently, frank admission of the inability to plot and invent.

And while the Baker Street trains hissed their steam under his window,¹ and the lodger downstairs "blew his room out," and the next door neighbor played hymns on Sunday with one finger, and the land lady was insolent, and the grocer refused to send the sugar so he had to get it himself,² and the fog burned his throat and he caught cold and never spoke to anybody for three weeks, and yet must drive his pen through page and page--while all this went on with a dreary monotony and "burdened his life to utter misery, "as he says, visions of Greece and Rome rose above the fogs and the fried fish shops of Euston Road.

This was a period of great literary activity. Both Isobel Clarendon and Demos appeared in 1886; and when the proceeds of the second edition of Demos netted him fifty pounds, his long cherished longing for a glimpse of Italy was realized. Previously, he wrote his sister Ellen: "I must go to Rome very shortly, if I beg my way. I dare not read a book about Rome, it gives me a sort of physical pain, so extreme is my desire to go there!"³

Upon his return to England he wrote that he was toiling on the construction of a new book: "Every book is harder than the one before, I find, but the next shall also be better than the one preceding. At last I shall have a public to attend to me at all events⁴ I cannot and will not be reckoned among the petty scribblers of the day, and to avoid it, I must for a time

1. Letters of George Gissing, p.216

2. Ibid p.159

3. Letters of George Gissing p.172

See also Ryecroft Papers p.206

4. Letters of George Gissing p.180

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1. Letters of George Glanville, p. 215.
2. Ibid. p. 133.
3. Letters of George Glanville, p. 173.
4. See also George Glanville's Letters, p. 202.

issue only one novel a year, and each book must have a distinct character, a book which no one else would be likely to have written.

"I have got a solid basis, and something shall be reared upon it. Don't desert me in the struggle, and try to have some faith in the result. I want money and all it will bring very badly, but I want a respectable position in literature yet more. When I write, I think of my best writers, not of the mob. Two things I aim at in my work: the love of everything that is beautiful, and the contempt of vulgar conventionality. Only a few people will understand, but more will do so in time. Only help me by some degree of hopefulness, and some day we will laugh at starvation at the top of Beatley Head."¹

Shortly after this, in 1887, Thyrza was published, and A Life's Morning followed in 1888, The Nether World in 1890, and The Emancipated in the same year. The prices paid for them increased until in 1891 he received over one thousand dollars for New Grub Street. In this year he yielded to another of those mad impulses of his, and married whom Mr. Wells describes as a "poor, tormented, miserable, angry servant-girl."² After two children were born the inevitable separation came.

Of Gissing's actions from 1891 to 1897 we know little save that now he was comparatively successful, and able to live at Exeter, away from London, and enjoy the country which he loved. His long neglect by people of his own intellectual calibre was at an end. He became great friends with George Meredith, Edward

1. Letters of George Gissing, p. 281

2. "Monthly Review" by H. G. Wells, August 1904

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Clodd, and Grant Allen.¹ He had a short visit in Greece, and, after his return says: "The subjects of my books will probably change a good deal; in fact, the process has already begun, as you will see in The Emancipated."²

He had very precarious health and strength in these days due, no doubt, to his early privations and incessant labor, which would have affected a more robust constitution not subject to fits of nervous disorder and to languors following over-strain. The following novels were produced during this period: Denzil Quarrier and Born in Exile, 1892; The Odd Women, 1893; In the Year of Jubilee, 1894; Eve's Ransom, The Paying Guest, and Sleeping Fires, 1895, and The Whirlpool, 1897. In his diary he says he is "writing with extraordinary difficulty and slowness these days."³ These days were also times of domestic misery⁴- his work interfered with by the aggravating lack of a servant,⁵ by a son's illness,⁶ and by his own illness. Friendship with Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Wells, whom he met shortly before 1897, afforded him pleasant companionship during a spring holiday, and later, in Italy, where Gissing gathered impressions for By the Ionian Sea. He wished to start his historical novel, but it was further put off while he earned "bread and cheese" with Human Odds and Ends, Dickens, and The Town Traveller, 1898; and The Crown of Life, 1899. By the Ionian Sea and Our Friend the Charlatan came out in 1901.

Having long been separated from his second wife, he formed a third connection with a French lady, a woman of education and

1. Letters of George Gissing, p. 342
2. Ibid p. 308
3. Ibid p. 327
4. Ibid p. 331
5. " p. 342
6. " p. 336

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1. Letters of George Gissing, p. 343
2. Ibid. p. 308
3. Ibid. p. 327
4. Ibid. p. 321
5. Ibid. p. 322

refinement whose acquaintance he made through her offer to translate one of his novels. He went to live in the south of France, and here at last he found a short period of happiness, although he was already suffering with an infected lung.

In 1902 he wrote to Edward Clodd: "All my leisure of the last six months has been given to Spanish. It has always been one of my ambitions to read Don Quixote in the original, and now, by the grace of heaven, I am able to do so--indeed, I draw towards the end of this glorious book 1903,--I have decided to write my six-century story. For the time I turn with disgust from modern life, whereas those old times call to me with a very pleasant voice. If I have anything like decent health at St. Jean Pied de-Port, I must get this book done. I think I can make it fairly good, for I have saturated myself with the spirit of that age. It ought to be infinitely picturesque;I wish it were mine to wander endlessly amid the silence of the ancient world, today and all its sounds forgotten."¹

The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft were written while he was busy upon his historical novel, Veranilda, which he was never to finish, for he died of pneumonia at St. Jean de Luz on December 28, 1903. Veranilda appeared lacking its final chapters the following year; in 1905 Will Warburton was issued; in 1906 The House of Cobwebs.

1. Memories, p. 185, by Edward Clodd (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1916)

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Part Two

A--Selections reminiscent of Gissing's school days

Godwin Peak is said to possess many of the author's characteristics, and in him we are said to have an accurate picture of Gissing as a boy:¹ "No common lad. A youth whose brain glowed like a furnace, whose heart throbbed with tumult of high ambitions, of inchoate desires; endowed with knowledge altogether exceptional for his years; a nature essentially militant, displaying itself in innumerable forms of callow intolerance--apt, assuredly, for some vigorous part in life, but as likely as not to rush headlong on traverse roads if no judicious mind assumed control of him."²

In Born In Exile Gissing gives us an elaborate account of prize day at Owens College during his student days there.³ Like Chilvens, he took first prizes in Senior Latin, English language and English literature. He also took the English Poem prize, which is here awarded to Earwaker. He could sympathize with Godwin Peak's disappointment; for in the Annual Classical Examination for Greek, and in the Higher Junior Classical Competition, he had received the second prizes.

"As Professor of Logic and Moral Philosophy, Dr. Nares began the distribution of prizes. Buckland, in spite of his resolve to exhibit no weakness, waited with unmistakable tremor for the announcement of the leading name, which might possibly be his own. A few words of comment prefaced the declaration--never had it been the Professor's lot to review more admirable

1. Letters of George Gissing, p.403

2. Born in Exile p. 34 (E. Smith & Co., London, 1893

3. English Literature During the Last Half Century, p.110, by J. W. Cunliffe

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2. Born in Exile, p. 34 (E. Smith & Co., London, 1893)
3. English Literature During the Last Half Century, p. 110.

papers than those to which he had awarded the first prize. The name of the student called upon to come forward was--Godwin Peak.

" 'Beaten!' escaped from Buckland's lips.

"A moment, and all eyes were directed upon the successful student, who rose from a seat half-way down the hall and descended the middle passage towards the row of professors. He was a young man of square figure and unhealthy complexion; his age not easily conjectured. Embarrassment no doubt accounted for much of the awkwardness of his demeanour; but, under any circumstances, he must have appeared ungainly, for his long arms and legs had outgrown their garments, which were no fashionable specimens of tailoring. The nervous gravity of his countenance had a peculiar sternness; one might have imagined that he was fortifying his self-control with scorn of the elegantly clad people through whom he passed. Amid plaudits, he received from the hands of the Principal a couple of solid volumes, and, thus burdened, returned with hurried step to his place.

" 'No one expected that', remarked Buckland to his father. 'He must have crammed furiously for the exam. It's outside his work for the First B.A.'

"But a second prize had been awarded. As soon as silence was restored, the Principal's gracious voice delivered a summons to 'Buckland Martin Warricombe.' A burst of acclamation, coming especially from that part of the amphitheatre where Whitelaw's nurslings had gathered in greatest numbers, seemed to declare the second prizeman distinctly more popular than the first.

" 'Second prize be hanged!' growled the young man, as he set

papers than those to which he had awarded the first prize. The name of the student called upon to come forward was--Gordon Park. "Best!" escaped from Buckland's lips.

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murderers had gathered in greatest numbers, seemed to denote

the second prizeman distinctly more popular than the first.

"Second prize he wanted!" cried the young man, as he sat

forth to receive the honour.

"'He would far rather have had none at all,' murmured his sister.

"'Oh, it'll do him good,' was her father's reply. 'Buckland has got into a way of swaggering.'

"'...There's nothing I care about now till Chemistry and Geology. Now we shall know who is strongest in aorists. I shouldn't wonder if Peak takes both Senior Greek and Latin. I heartily hope he'll beat that ass Chilvens.'

"But the name so offensive to young Warricombe was the first that issued from the Professor's lips. 'In Senior Greek, the first prize is taken by--Bruno Leathwaite Chilvens.'

"'Then I suppose Peak comes second,' muttered Buckland.

"So it proved. Summoned to receive the inferior prize, Godwin Peak, his countenance harsher than before, his eyes cast down, moved ungracefully to the estrade. And during the next half-hour this twofold exhibition was several times repeated. In Senior Latin, in Modern and Ancient History, in English Language and Literature, in French, first sounded the name of Chilvens, whilst to the second award was invariably attacked that of Peak.

"'It's Peak's own fault,' declared Buckland. 'Chilvens stuck to the subjects of his course. Peak has been taking up half-a-dozen extras, and they've done for him. I shouldn't wonder if he went in for the Poem and the Essay: I know he was thinking about both.'"¹ However these prizes fell upon John Edward Earwaker, and the title of the poem which Gissing had in

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Godwin Peak, like Gissing, desired to excell at college, and he, too, had a certain intellectual arrogance which was not always attractive: "It being customary for the regular students of Whitelaw to graduate at London University, Peak passed his matriculation, and worked on for the preliminary test then known as First B.A. In the meanwhile he rose steadily, achieving distinction in college. The more observant of his teachers remarked him even where he fell short of academic triumph, and among his fellow students he had the name of a stern 'sweater,' one not easily beaten where he had set his mind on excelling. He was not generally liked, for his mood appeared unsocial, and a repelling arrogance was sometimes felt in his talk."¹

Godwin Peak again expresses Gissing's feelings:

"Like all proud natures condemned to solitude, he tried to convince himself that he had no need of society, that he despised its attractions, and could be self-sufficing. So far was this from the truth that he often regarded with bitter envy those of his fellow-students who had the social air."²

Further, "With the growth of his militant egoism, there had developed in Godwin Peak an excess of nervous sensibility which threatened to deprive his character of the initiative rightly belonging to it. Self-assertion is the practical compliment of self-esteem. To be largely endowed with the latter quality, yet constrained by a coward delicacy to repress it, is to suffer

1. Born in Exile, p.37
2. " " " p.41

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martyrdom at the pleasure of every robust assailant, and in the end be driven to the refuge of a moody solitude."¹

Gissing without doubt felt great sympathy with Peak when he described him thus:

"Such play of the imagination and speculative faculties accounts for the common awkwardness of intelligent young men in society that is strange to them. Only a cultivation of a double consciousness puts them finally at ease. Impossible to converse with suavity, and to heed the forms of ordinary good-breeding, when the brain is absorbed in all manner of new problems; one must learn to act a part, to control the facial mechanism, to observe and anticipate, even whilst the intellect is spending its sincere energy on subjects unavowed. The perfectly graceful man will always be he who has no strong apprehension either of his own personality or that of others, who lives on the surface of things, who can be interested without emotion, and surprised, without contemplative impulse. Never yet had Godwin Peak uttered a word that was worth listening to, or made a remark that declared his mental powers, save in most familiar colloquy."²

Godwin Peak, like Gissing, leaves College without a degree, not, however, through any fault of his own. Peak suffers, as Gissing suffered, among the London vulgar. B--Selections reminiscent of his early manhood and struggle with poverty:

I- Near the end of Workers in the Dawn are some of his

1. Born in Exile, p.64
2. " " " p.27

impressions of his voyage across the Atlantic to America:

"The voyage proved long and stormy, yet from the first morning of his going up on deck to look out on to the Atlantic to the coming to anchor in the docks at New York, Arthur's body and soul were pervaded with exuberance of health such as he had never enjoyed. When he lay in his berth at night, listening to the lash and thunder of the waves against the sides of the vessel; to the cracking and straining of the masts and cordage, to the shrill whistle upon deck, now and then making itself heard above the duller noises, his heart was filled with a wild wish that the winds might sweep yet more fiercely upon the heaving water, that the ocean might swell up to mountainous waves, such deep delight did he experience in the midst of the grand new scene. Throughout the day, no stress of weather could suffice to keep him below. It was his chief pleasure to sit in the stern, in the shelter of the wheel-house, from whence he could overlook the whole length of the ship as it plunged down the sides of the huge water-gulfs. How little she looked for all her thousands of tons burden, and what a mere mite she would have made in the gullet of the insatiable deep! Then, to turn and look down into the frothy hell beneath the stern; to watch for minutes the fierce whirlpool where the untiring screw was struggling amid a thousand conflicting currents, and then to feel the vessel rising upwards, upwards, till at length a mountain of deep green water surged from beneath her, showing a surface smooth and solid-looking as ice, threatening the very sky in its upward

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water surged from beneath her, showing a surface smooth and solid-looking as ice, threatening the very sky in its onward

striving. Day after day the same spectacle lay before his eye from morning to night, and yet he never wearied of watching it. Though towards evening the wave-splashed deck became too slippery to stand upon, though the ropes were stiff with ice, though the wind cut through the darkening air with the swift keenness of steel, yet not till he was obliged would Arthur descend to the saloon, the picture was too engrossing in its majesty. He almost believed that the mind expanded in the mere act of watching; he felt capable of greater thoughts than formerly; the thought of his security in the midst of such terrors gave him a loftier and truer conception of human powers than he had yet attained to."¹

The full measure of agony through which the writer himself suffered is portrayed in the lives of the two unrecognized novelists in New Grub Street. In Whelpdale he tells of his American experiences:

"I won't trouble you with an account of how I lived whilst I still had money, but at last I got into perilous straits... I took an emigrant train to Chicago with not quite five dollars in my pockets, and, with a courage which I now marvel at, I paid immediately four dollars for a week's lodging. I saw nothing for it but to apply at the office of some newspaper, and as I happened to light upon the biggest of them first of all, I put on a bold face. I introduced myself, stated my business. 'Can you give me work of any kind on your paper?' 'Well, what experience have you had?' 'None whatever.' The editor smiled,

1. Workers in the Dawn p. 495 Remington & Co. London, 1880. On page 12 in Letters of George Gissing, he gives a similar description of his voyage

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'I'm very much afraid you would be no use to us.' 'If I write a story of English life, will you consider it?' 'With Pleasure.' I looked for a stationer's shop, and laid out a few of my remaining cents in the purchase of pen, ink, and paper-my stock of all these things was at an end when I left New York. Then back to the boarding house. Impossible to write in my bedroom, the temperature was below zero; there was no choice but to sit down in the common room, a place like the smoke-room of a poor commercial hotel in England. A dozen men were gathered about the fire, smoking, talking, quarrelling. Favourable conditions, you see, for literary effort. But the story had to be written, and write it I did, sitting there at the end of a dial table; I finished it in less than a couple of days, a good long story, enough to fill three columns of the huge paper. I stand amazed at my power of concentration when ever I think of it!

"For some months I supported myself in Chicago, writing for that same paper, and for others. But at length the flow of my inspiration was checked; I had written myself out. And I began to get homesick, wanted to get back to England. The result was that I found myself one day in New York again, but without money enough to pay for a passage home. I tried to write one more story. But it happened, as I was looking over papers in a reading-room, that I saw one of my Chicago tales copied into a paper published at Troy. Now Troy was not very far off, and it occurred to me that, if I went there, the editor of this paper might be disposed to employ me, seeing he

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had a taste for my fiction. And I went up the Hudson by steamboat. On landing at Troy I was as badly off as when I reached Chicago; I had less than a dollar. And the worst of it was, I had come on a vain errand; the editor treated me with scant courtesy, and no work was to be got. I took a little room, paying for it day by day, and in the meantime I fed on those loathesome peanuts, buying a handful in the street now and then. And, I assure you, I looked starvation in the face.

"I went one afternoon into a lawyer's office, thinking I might get some copy-work, and there I found an odd-looking old man, sitting with an open Bible on his knees. 'Go,' he said, 'to such and such a boarding-house, and ask for Mr. Freeman Sterling. He is just starting on a business tour, and wants a young man to accompany him.' I didn't dream of asking what the business was, but sped, as fast as my trembling limbs would carry me, to the address he had mentioned. I asked for Mr. Freeman Sterling, and found him. He was a photographer, and his business at present was to go about getting orders for the reproducing of old portraits. A good-natured fellow. He said he liked the look of me, and on the spot engaged me to assist him in a house to house visitation. He would pay for my board and lodging, and give me a commission on all the orders I obtained. Forthwith I sat down to a 'square meal', and ate--my conscience, how I ate!

"I don't think I got half a dozen orders. Yet that good Samaritan supported me for five or six weeks, whilst we traveled

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from Troy to Boston. It couldn't go on,--I was ashamed of myself; at last I told him I must part."¹

In the philisophical progress of the heroine of Workers in the Dawn, we find echoes of the author's own work in Germany:

"Schopenhauer, Comte, and Shelley--these three in turn have directed the growth of my moral life. Schopenhauer taught me to forget myself and to live in others. Comte then came to me with his lucid unfolding of the mystery of the world, and taught me the use to which my sympathy should be directed. Last of all, Shelley breathed with the breath of life on the dry bones of scientific theory, turned conviction into passion, lit the heavens of the future with such glorious rays that the eye struggles in gazing upwards, strengthened the heart with enthusiasm as with a coat of mail."²

Biffen, in New Grub Street, managed to fight hunger by teaching, and his teaching was a matter of 'coaching' similar to that adapted by Gissing in his attempt to keep alive during his worst period of struggle:

"The teaching by which he partly lived was a kind quite unknown to the respectable tutorial world. In these days of examinations, numbers of men in a poor fashion--clerks chiefly--conceive a hope that by 'passing' this, that, or the other formal test they may open for themselves a new career. Not a few such persons nourish preposterous ambitions; there are warehouse clerks privately preparing (without any means or prospect of them) for a call to the Bar, drapers' assistants

1. New Grub Street, pages 417, 418, 419, 420, 421
(Modern Library, 1936, New York)
2. Workers in The Dawn p. 157

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II Characteristics

Mr. Austin Harrison, whom Gissing tutored, wrote that Arthur Golding in Workers in the Dawn is a conscious autobiographical picture of the author himself:²

"His eyes were of light blue, his nose was of a Grecian type, his lips and chin were moulded in form expressive of extreme sensibility and gentleness of disposition, showing traces, moreover, of instability in moral character."³

Piers Otway, the hero of The Crown of Life, like Gissing, was "intensely self-conscious; he suffered from a habit of comparing, contrasting himself with other men, with men who achieved things, who made their way, who played a part in the world."⁴

There is very much of Gissing in Gilbert Grail, who appears in Thyrza: his passion for literature, his weakness, his intense resentment against circumstance--"Neither had he

1. New Grub Street, p.150

2. "Nineteenth Century" by Austin Harrison, September, 1906

3. Workers in the Dawn p.2

4. The Crown of Life. p.80 (Methuen & Co. Ltd. London, 1899)

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1. New Grip Street, p. 150.
2. "Wiltshire Century" by Austin Harrison, September, 1908.
3. Workers in the Dawn, p. 3.
4. The Crown of Life, p. 80 (Methuen & Co. Ltd. London, 1899).

friends. There were at all times good fellows to be found among those with whom he worked, but again his shyness held him apart, and indeed, he felt that intercourse with them would afford him but brief satisfaction. Occasionally, some man more thoughtful than the rest would be drawn to him by curiosity, but, finding himself met with so much reserve, involuntary in Gilbert, would become doubtful and turn elsewhere for sympathy. Yet in this respect Grail improved as time went on; as his character ripened, he was readier to gossip now and then of common things with average associates. He knew, however, that he was not much liked, and this naturally gave a certain coldness to his behaviour."¹

Here is another picture of Gissing's unsociability in Mallard, a character in The Emancipated:

"He was called unsociable, and doubtless he was in the sense that he could not find anyone for whose society he greatly cared."²

In the character of Reuben, of the same book, are some reminiscences of the author's character. In withholding direct encouragement from her brother Reuben, Miriam is warned that it will result in his complete discouragement. Reuben's misery, his inability to fight his weakness, his failure to succeed along the right path, is perhaps, like Gissing's failure to make a success of himself in life.

In this picture of Egremont we have another glimpse of Gissing, and his need of sympathetic help:

1. Thyrza, p. 70 (Eveleigh Nash & Grayson Ltd. London, 1928)
2. The Emancipated, p. 78 (Way and Williams, Chicago, 1897)

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1. Thyres, p. 70 (Eveling, Wash & Grayson Ltd., London, 1938)
2. The Emancipated, p. 78 (Way and Williams, Chicago, 1937)

"Egremont's face showed that things were not altogether well with him. It was not ill-health, but mental restlessness, which expressed itself in the lines of his forehead and the diminished brightness of his eyes. During the last two months he had felt a constant need of help, and help such as would alone stead him, he could not find."¹

Constantly in his letters, as I mentioned in Part One, Gissing begs for the sympathy of his family.

This is a passage from Isobel Clarendon which recalls Gissing's frequent habit of inward brooding:

"Kingcote's way of walking was that of a man accustomed to his own society, he advanced slowly, yet without pauses, and often became forgetful of the things around him It was plain that he enjoyed to the full the scenes through which he passed, and enjoyed them as a man of poetic sensibilities, but there was no exuberance of vitality in his delight.... To judge from his countenance the communing which he held with himself was constant and lively; at times words even fell from his lips. It was not the face of a man at ease with his own heart, or with the circumstances amid which his life had fallen. A glance of pleasure hither or thither was often succeeded by the shadow of brooding, and this by a gleam of passion, brief but significant enough."²

Gissing's keen appetite for knowledge throughout all these years is expressed by Wilfrid Athel in A Life's Morning:

"'Isn't it hateful,' he broke forth, 'this enforced idleness of mine? To think that weeks and weeks go by and I remain just

1. Thyrza, p. 142

2. Isobel Clarendon P. 58, (Chapman & Co., London, 1888)

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"Isn't it hateful," he broke forth, "this enforced idleness of mine? To think that weeks and weeks go by and I remain just

where I was, when the loss of an hour used to seem to me an irreparable misfortune. I have such an appetite for knowledge, surely the unhappiest gift a man can be endowed with; it leads to nothing but frustration. Perhaps the appetite weakens as one grows in years; perhaps the sphere of one's keener interests contracts; I hope it may be so. At times I cannot work--I mean, I could not--for a sense of the vastness of the field before me..... I fear to enter museums and galleries; I am distracted by the numberless desires that seize upon me, depressed by the hoplessness of satisfying them. I cannot even enjoy music from the mere feeling that I do not enjoy it enough, that I have not had time to study it, that I shall never get at its secret."¹

Reminiscences of Gissing's Russian reading² are to be found in The Crown of Life. He sends his hero to Russia full of the intention to establish a better understanding between that country and England:

"He hoped to know it very well, and, perhaps, to impart his knowledge of it to others. Not many Englishmen mastered the language, or, indeed, knew anything of it; that huge empire was a mere blank to be filled up by the imaginings of prejudice and hostility. Was it not a task setting before oneself, worth pursuing for a life-time, that of trying to make known to English folk their bugbear of the East?"³

Gissing's admiration for Hogarth appears in The Unclassed: "Waymark was eyeing the mighty volume on the chair, and had recognized it. Some fortnight previously he had come upon

1. A Life's Morning, p. 37 (E.P. Dutton & Co. New York, 1929)
2. Letters of George Gissing, pages 136, 138, 141, 204
3. The Crown of Life, p. 95

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Abraham, in the latter's study, turning over a collection of Hogarth's plates, and greatly amusing himself with the realism which so distinctly appealed to his taste in art. The book had been pledged in the shop, and by lapse of time had become Abraham's property. It was the first time that Waymark had had an opportunity of examining Hogarth; the pictures harmonized with his mood; they gave him a fresh impulse in the direction his library projects were taking. He spent a couple of hours in turning the leaves, and Mr. Woodstock had observed his enjoyment."¹

C- Selections reminiscent of his struggle as a novelist and of his maturity.

I- At the time of writing the author possessed not a little sympathy with the views expressed here by Harold Biffen:²

"I have thought of a new way of putting it. What I really aim at is an absolute realism in the sphere of the ignobly decent. The field, as I understand it, is a new one; I don't know any writer who has treated ordinary vulgar life with fidelity and seriousness. Zola writes deliberate tragedies; his vilest figures become heroic from the place they fill in a strongly imagined drama. I want to deal with the essentially unheroic, with the day to day life of that vast majority of people who are at the mercy of paltry circumstance.

Dickens understood the possibility of such work, but his tendency to melodrama on the one hand, and his humour on the other, prevented him from thinking of it.... I want, among other things, to insist upon the fateful power of trivial incidents. No one

1. The Unclassed, p. 257, Vol. I (Chapman & Hall, Ltd.
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2. New Grub Street, p. 27

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1. The Unpleasant, p. 257, Vol. I (Oxford & Hall, Ltd.

London, 1884)

2. New York Street, p. 27

has yet dared to do this seriously.....I want to take no side at all; simply to say, Look, this is the kind of thing that happens.'"

The following advice the young author tried to follow in his writing:

"'Paint a faithful picture of this crowd we have watched,' was the advice which old Mr. Tollady gave to Arthur Golding, 'be a successor of Hogarth, and give us the true image of our social dress, as he did of those of his own day. Paint them as you see them, and get your picture hung in the Academy. It would be a moral lesson to all who looked upon it, surpassing in value every sermon that fanaticism has ever concocted.'"¹

Gissing further expresses his purpose in writing through the character of Waymark:

"'I'm making an article out of Elm court. Semi-descriptive, semi-reflective, wholly cynical. Maybe it will pay for my summer holiday. And, apropos of the same subject, I've got great ideas. This introduction to such phases of life will prove endlessly advantageous to me, artistically speaking. Let me get a little more experience, and I will write a novel such as no one has yet ventured to write, at all events in England. I begin to see my way to magnificent effects; ye gods, such light and shade! The fact is, the novel of every-day life is getting worn out. We must dig deeper, get to untouched social strata. Dickens felt this, but he had not the courage to face his subjects; his monthly numbers had to lie on the family tea-table. Not 'virginibus puerisque' will be my book, I assure

1. Workers in the Dawn, p. 57

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"Paint a faithful picture of this crowd we have watched,"

was the advice which old Mr. Tollydy gave to Arthur Golding, 'be a successor of Hogarth, and give us the true image of our social dress, as he did of those of his own day. Paint them as you see them, and get your picture hung in the Academy. It would be a moral lesson to all who looked upon it, surpassing in value every sermon that fanaticism has ever concocted.'
Gissing further expresses his purpose in writing through

the character of Waymark:

"I'm making an article out of Elm court. Semi-descriptive,

semi-reflective, wholly cynical. Maybe it will pay for my summer holiday. And, apropos of the same subject, I've got great ideas. This introduction to such phases of life will prove endlessly advantageous to me, artistically speaking. Let me get a little more experience, and I will write a novel such as no one has yet ventured to write, at all events in England. I begin to see my way to magnificent effects; ye gods, such light and shade! The fact is, the novel of every-day life is getting worn out. We must dig deeper, get to untouched social strata. Dickens felt this, but he had not the courage to face his subject; his monthly numbers had to lie on the family tea-table. Not 'vividness overdone,' will be my book, I assure

you, but for men and women who like to look beneath the surface, and who understand that only as artistic material has human life any significance. Yes, that is the conclusion I am working round to. The artist is the only sane man. Life for its own sake?--No; I would drink a pint of laudanum tonight. But life is the source of splendid pictures, inexhaustible material for effects--that can reconcile me to existence, and that only. It is a delight followed by no bitter after-taste, and the only such delight I know."¹

Gissing's earnestness and carefulness in writing are revealed in the two following passages:

"'And yet,' Reardon continued, 'Of course it isn't only for the sake of reputation that one tries to do uncommon work. There's the shrinking from conscious insincerity of workmanship--which most of the writers nowadays never seem to feel....Perhaps I am absurdly inconsistent when--though knowing my work can't be first-rate--I strive to make it as good as possible.'"²

Here Gissing is describing Biffen at work:

"He worked very slowly. The book would make perhaps two volumes of ordinary novel size, but he had laboured over it many months, patiently, affectionately, scrupulously. Each sentence was as good as he could make it, harmonious to the ear, with words of precious meaning skilfully set. Before sitting down to a chapter he planned it minutely in his mind; then he wrote a rough draft of it, then he elaborated the thing phrase by phrase. He had no thought of whether such toil would be recompensed in coin of the realm; nay, it was his

1. The Unclassed, p. 81, Vol. I

2. New Grub Street, p. 53

you, but for men and women who like to look beneath the surface, and who understand that only as artistic material has human life any significance. Yes, that is the conclusion I am working round to. The artist is the only sane man. Life for its own sake?--No; I would drink a pint of lambdam tonight. But life is the source of splendid pictures, inexhaustible material for effects--that can reconcile me to existence, and that only is a delight followed by no bitter after-taste, and the only such delight I know.

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conviction that, if with difficulty published, it could scarcely bring him money. The work must be significant, that was all he cared for."¹

Early in New Grub Street the author describes the flat near Regent's Park, which he was occupying alone at the time of writing:

"Eight flights of stairs, consisting alternately of eight and nine steps. Amy had made the calculation, and wondered what was the cause of this arrangement. The ascent was trying, but then no one could contest the respectability of the abode. In the flat immediately beneath resided a successful musician, whose carriage and pair came at a regular hour each afternoon to take him and his wife for a most respectable drive. In this special building no one else seemed at present to keep a carriage, but all the tenants were gentle-folk.

"And as to living up at the very top, why, there were distinct advantages--as so many people of moderate income are hastening to discover. The noise from the street was diminished at this height, no possible trampers could establish themselves above your head; the air was bound to be purer than that of inferior strata; finally, one had the flat roof whereon to sit or expatiate in sunny weather. True that a gentle rain or soot was wont to interfere with one's comfort out there in the open, but such minutiae are easily forgotten in the fervour of domestic description. It was undeniable that on a fine day one enjoyed extensive views....These things one's friends were expected to admire.

1. New Grub Street, p. 456. In Letters of George Gissing, p. 39, 62, 87, 282, we have similar pictures of Gissing.

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"A sitting room, a bedroom, a kitchen. But the kitchen was called dining-room, or even parlour at need; for the cooking-range lent itself to concealment behind an ornamental screen, the walls displayed pictures and bookcases, and a tiny scullery which lay apart sufficed for the coarser domestic operations. This was Amy's territory during the hours when her husband was working, or endeavoring to work. Of necessity, Edwin Reardon used the front room as his study. His writing table stood against the window, each wall had its shelves of serried literature; vases, busts, engravings (all of the inexpensive kind) served for ornaments.It was Reardon's habit to begin the serious work of the day at about three o'clock, and to continue with brief interruptions until ten or eleven; in many respects an awkward arrangement, but enforced by the man's temperament and his poverty.

"One evening he sat at his desk with a slip of manuscript paper before him. It was the hour of sunset. His outlook was upon the backs of certain huge houses skirting Regent's Park, and Lights had begun to show here and there in the windows..... For two or three hours Reardon had been seated in much the same attitude. Occasionally, he dipped his pen into the ink and seemed about to write: but each time the effort was abortive. At the head of the paper was inscribed 'Chapter III,' but that was all. And now the sky was dusking over; darkness would soon fall.

"He looked something older than his years, which were two and thirty; on his face was the pallor of mental suffering.

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"He looked something older than his years, which were two and thirty; on his face was the pallor of mental suffering.

Often he fell into a fit of absence, and gazed at vacancy with wide, miserable eyes. Returning to consciousness, he fidgeted nervously on his chair, dipped his pen for the hundredth time, bent forward in feverish determination to work. Useless; he scarcely knew what he desired to put into words, and his brain refused to construct the simplest sentence."¹

The last-mentioned is a picture of Gissing at work in his most difficult days.² To go on:

"After all, there came a day when Edwin Reardon found himself regularly at work once more, ticking off his stipulated quantum of manuscript each four-and-twenty hours. He wrote a very small hand; sixty written slips of the kind of paper he habitually used would represent--thanks to the astonishing system which prevails in such matters: large type, wide spacing, frequency of blank pages--a passable three-hundred page-volume. On an average he could write four such slips a day.....At that rate he might have his book sold by Christmas. He seldom slept for more than two or three consecutive hours in the night, and the time of wakefulness was often terrible. The various sounds which marked the stages from midnight to dawn had grown miserably familiar to him; worst torture to his mind was the chiming and striking of clocks. If the hour was complete, he waited anxiously for its number. Two, three, even four, were grateful; there was still a long time before he need rise and face the dreaded task, the horrible four blank slips of paper that had to be filled ere he might sleep again. But such rest-

1. New Grub Street, pages, 45, 46, 47.

2. Letters of George Gissing, pages 203, 208, 210, 214, 219, would seem to prove this.

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1. New Club Street, pages 45, 46, 47.
2. Letters of George Glasing, pages 203, 210, 214, 215.
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lessness was only for a moment; no sooner had the workhouse bell become silent than he began to toil in his weary imagination, or else incapable of that, to vision fearful hazards of the future.

"For a week he got on at the desired rate; then came once more the crisis he had anticipated.¹

"A familiar symptom of the malady which falls upon outwearied imagination. There were floating in his mind five or six possible subjects for a book, all dating back to the time when he first began novel-writing, when ideas came freshly to him. If he grasped desperately at one of these, and did his best to develop it, for a day or two he could almost content himself; characters, situations, lines of motive, were laboriously schemed, and he felt ready to begin writing. But scarcely had he done a chapter when all the structure fell into flatness. He had made a mistake. Not this story, but that other one, was what he should have taken. The other one in question, left out of mind for a time, had come back with a face of new possibility; it invited him, tempted him to throw aside what he had already written--Good; now he was in more hopeful train. But a few days, and the experience repeated itself. No. not this story, but that third one, of which he had not thought for a long time. How could he have rejected so hopeful a subject?"² (New Grub Street)

Gissing had no less a horror of noticing the reviews of his books than he attributes to Reardon:

"One of Reardon's minor worries at this time was the fear that by chance he might come upon a review of "Margaret Hume."

1. Letters of George Gissing, pages 211, 215, indicate this.
2. New Grub Street, pages 126, 127, 128

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Glasgow had no less a horror of noticing the reviews of his books than he attributes to Reardon: "One of Reardon's minor worries at this time was the fear that by chance he might come upon a review of 'Waterloo Home'.

1. Letters of George Glasgow, pages 311, 312, indicate this.
2. New Group Street, pages 132, 137, 138

Since the publication of his first book he had avoided as far as possible all knowledge of what the critics had to say about him; his nervous temperament could not bear the agitation of reading these remarks, which, however inept, define an author and his work to so many people incapable of judging for themselves.

No man or woman could tell him anything in the way of praise or blame which he did not already know quite well; commendation was pleasant, but it so often aimed amiss, and censure was for the most part so unintelligent. In the case of this latest novel he dreaded the sight of a review as he would have done a gash from a rusty knife. The judgments could not but be damnatory, and their expression in journalistic phrase would disturb his mind with evil rancour. No one would have insight enough to appreciate the nature and cause of his book's demerits; every comment would be wide of the mark; sneer, ridicule, trite objection, would but madden him with a sense of injustice."¹

It is evidently of himself he speaks when Milvain says:

"'There's a friend of mine who writes novels. His books are not works of genius, but they are glaringly distinct from the ordinary circulating novel. Well, after one or two attempts, he made half a success; that is to say, the publishers brought out a second edition of the book in a few months. There was his opportunity. But he couldn't use it; he had no friends because he had no money. A book of half that merit, if written by a man in the position of Warbury when he started, would have established the reputation of a life time...But the novel

1. New Grub Street, p. 219

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I am speaking of was practically forgotten a year after its appearance."¹

From New Grub Street we get a frank confession of Gissing's difficulty in plotting:²

"'You mustn't forget, Amy, that it needs a particular kind of faculty to write stories of this sort. The invention of a plot is just the thing I find most difficult.'"³

A similar reception greeted Gissing's own earlier book, Workers in the Dawn,⁴ as did Waymark's:

"In the early days of October, Waymark's book appeared. It excited no special attention. Here and there a reviewer was found who ventured to hint that there was powerful writing in this new novel, but no one dared to heartily recommend it to public attention. By some it was classed with the 'unsavoury productions of the so-called naturalists' school;' others passed it by with a few lines of unfavourable comment. Clearly it was destined to bring the author neither fame nor fortune."⁵

In the following Biffen bears the brunt of adverse criticism Gissing's early books caused him:⁶

"Milvain's skillful efforts notwithstanding 'Mr. Bailey, Grocer,' had no success. By the publishers the book had been declined; the firm which brought it out offered the author half profits and fifteen pounds on account, greatly to Harold Biffen's satisfaction. But reviewers in general were either angry or coldly contemptuous. 'Let Mr. Biffen bear in mind,' said one of these sages, 'that a novelist's first duty is to tell a

1. New Grub Street p. 27, 28

2. Letters of George Gissing, pages 310, 327

3. New Grub Street, p. 54

4. Letters of George Gissing, page 83

5. The Unclassed p. 259

6. Letters of George Gissing, p. 72

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1. New York Street p. 27, 28
2. Letters of George Gissing, pages 210, 227
3. New York Street p. 24
4. Letters of George Gissing, page 23
5. The Unclassed p. 229

story.' 'Mr. Biffen,' wrote another, "seems not to understand that a work of art must before everything else afford amusement.' 'A pretentious book of the genre ennuyant,' was the brief comment of a Society journal. A weekly of high standing began its short notice in a rage: 'Here is another of those intolerable productions for which we are indebted to the spirit of groveling realism. This author, let it be said, is never offensive, but then one must go on to describe his work by a succession of negatives; it is never interesting, never profitable, never---' and the rest. The eulogy in the West End had a few timid echoes. That in The Current would have secured more imitators, but unfortunately it appeared when most of the reviewing had already been done. And, as Jasper truly said, only a concurrence of powerful testimonials could have compelled any number of people to affect an interest in this book. 'The first duty of a novelist is to tell a story:' the perpetual repetition of this phrase is a warning to all men who propose drawing from the life. Biffen only offered a slice of biography, and it was found to lack flavour."¹

II- Radicalism and Philosophy having lost their interest for Gissing, Art had now taken their place:

"'It is horrible,' he explained in speaking of Waymark's book, 'often hideous and revolting to me; but I feel its absolute truth. Such a book will do more good than half a dozen religious societies. If only people can be got to read it. Yet I care nothing for that aspect of the thing. Is it artist-

1. New Grub Street, p. 520

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II--Rationalism and Philosophy having lost their interest for Gladstone, Art had now taken their place: "It is horrible," he explained in speaking of Newman's book, 'often hideous and revolting to me; but I feel its absolute truth. Such a book will do more good than half a dozen religious societies. If only people can be got to read it. Yet I care nothing for that aspect of the thing. Is it artistic

cally good? Is it as good as a picture? There was a time when I might have written in this way with a declared social object. That is all gone by. I have no longer a spark of social enthusiasm. Art is all I care for, and as art I wish my work to be judged.'

"'One would have thought,' said Julian, 'that increased knowledge of these fearful things would have had just the opposite effect.'

"'Yes,' exclaimed the other, 'and so it would be in the case of a man born to be radical. I often amuse myself with taking to pieces my former self. I was not a conscious hypocrite in those days of violent radicalism, working-man's club-lecturing, and the like; the fault was that I understood myself as yet so imperfectly. That zeal on behalf of the suffering masses was nothing more nor less than disguised zeal on behalf of my own starved passions. I was poor and desperate, life had no pleasures, the future seemed hopeless, yet I was overflowing with vehement desires, every move in me was a hunger which cried to be appeased. I identified myself with the poor and ignorant; I did not make their cause my own but my own cause theirs. I raved for freedom because I was myself in the bondage of unsatisfiable longing.

"'Well,' he went on, 'I have come out of all that, in proportion as my artistic self-consciousness has developed. For one thing, I am not so miserable as I was then, personally; then again, I have found my vocation. You know pretty well the phases I have passed through. Upon ranting radicalism

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followed a period of philosophical study. My philosophy, I have come to see, was worth nothing; what philosophy is worth anything? It had its use for myself, however; it made me by self degrees, self-conscious, and brought me to see that in art alone I could find full satisfaction.'

"'Yet,' urged Julian, 'the old direction still shows itself in your choice of subjects. Granting that this is pure art, it is a kind of art only possible to an age in which the social question is predominant.'

"'True, very likely. Every strong individuality is more or less the expression of his age. This direction may be imposed upon me, for all that, I understand why I pursue it.'

"After reflecting, Julian spoke in another tone. 'Imagine yourself in my position. Could you appreciate the artistic effect of your own circumstances?

"Probably not. And it is because I recognize that, that I grow more and more careful to hold aloof from situations that would threaten my peace of mind. My artistic egotism bids fair to ally itself with vulgar selfishness. That tendency I must resist. For the artist ought to be able to make material of his own sufferings, even while the suffering is at its height. To what other end does he suffer? In very deed, he is the only man whose misery finds justification in apparent result.'"¹

Walter Egremont writes to Mrs. Armond a sentiment which Gissing expressed in the Ryecroft Papers:²

"Do you know what I ought to have been?--a school-master.

1. The Unclassed, p. 94, Vol. I

2. Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, p. 97

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Walter Egremont writes to Mrs. Armond a sentiment which Glasie expressed in the Ryecroft Papers:

"Do you know what I ought to have been--a school-master."

That is to say, if I wished to do any work of direct good to my fellows in the world. I could have taught boys well, better than I shall ever do anything else. I could not only have taught them--'the gerund-grinding' of Thomas Carlyle--but could have inspired them with love of learning, at all events such as were capable of being so inspired."¹

Harvey Rolfe, in The Whirlpool, is similar to Gissing: he too dislikes company and society; he professes to like, though not to understand, music; and he suffers from domestic misery caused by a misunderstanding wife and servantless house-hold,² even as Gissing was suffering at the time he was writing The Whirlpool.³

Gissing's love for his eldest boy, who was also a sickly child, is portrayed here in Harvey Rolfe, and the following is an autobiographical picture of the author and his son:

"Harvey could not see too much of the boy, indoors or out, and it rejoiced him to know that his love was returned in full measure; for Hughie would at any time abandon other amusements to be with his father. In these winter months, when by rare chance there came a fine Sunday or Saturday, they went off together to Kew or Richmond, and found endless matter for talk, delightful to both of them. Hughie, now four years old, was well grown, and could walk two or three miles without weariness. ...If anything chanced to ail him, Harvey suffered an excessive disquiet; for the young life seemed to him so delicate a thing that any touch of pain might wither it away. Because of the unutterable anguish in the thought, he had often forced himself

1. Thyraz, p. 256

2. The Whirlpool p. 387 (Bell & Co., London, 1897)

3. Letters of George Gissing, p. 345

That is to say, if I wished to do any work of direct good to my fellows in the world. I could have taught boys well, better than I shall ever do anything else. I could not only have taught them--the germ-grinding of Thomas Carlyle--but could have inspired them with love of learning, at all events such as were capable of being so inspired.¹

Harvey Rolfe, in The Whirlpool, is similar to Gissing: he too dislikes company and society; he professes to like, though not to understand, music; and he suffers from domestic misery caused by a misunderstanding wife and servile house-hold,² even as Gissing was suffering at the time he was writing The Whirlpool.³

Gissing's love for his eldest boy, who was also a sickly child, is portrayed here in Harvey Rolfe, and the following is an autobiographical picture of the author and his son:

"Harvey could not see too much of the boy, indoors or out, and it rejoiced him to know that his love was returned in full measure; for Hattie would at any time abandon other amusements to be with his father. In these winter months, when by rare chance there came a fine Sunday or Saturday, they went off together to Kew or Richmond, and found endless matter for talk, delightful to both of them. Hattie, now four years old, was well grown, and could walk two or three miles without weariness. . . . If anything chanced to ail him, Harvey suffered an excessive disquiet; for the young life seemed to him so delicate a thing that any touch of pain might wither it away. Because of the unutterable anguish in the thought, he had often forced himself

1. Thyrs, p. 282
2. The Whirlpool p. 287 (Bell & Co., London, 1897)
3. Letters of George Gissing, p. 245

to front the possibility of Hughie's death, and had even brought himself to feel that in truth it would be no reason for sorrow; how much better to fall asleep in playtime, and wake no more, than to outlive the happiness and innocence which pass forever with childhood. And when the fear of life lay heaviest upon him, he found solace in remembering that after no great lapse of time he and those he loved would have vanished from the earth, would be as though they had never been at all; every pang and woe awaiting them suffered and forgotten; the best and the worst gone by forever; the brief flicker of troubled light quenched in eternal oblivion. It was Harvey Rolfe's best substitute for the faith and hope of the old world.

"He liked to feel the soft little hand clasping his own fingers, so big and coarse in comparison, and happily so strong. For in the child's weakness he felt an infinite pathos; a being so entirely helpless, so utterly depended upon another's love, standing there amid a world of cruelties, smiling and trustful. And his heart went forth in the desire to protect and cherish. Nothing else seemed of moment beside this one duty which was also the purest joy. The word 'father,' however sweet to his ear, had at times given him a thrill of awe; spoken by childish lips, did it mean less than 'God?' He was the giver of life, and for that dread gift must hold himself responsible. A man in his agony may call upon some unseen power, but the heavens are mute; can a father turn away in heedlessness if the eyes of his child reproach him? All pleasures, aims, hopes that con-

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cerned himself alone, shrank to the idlest trifling when he realized the immense debt due from him to his son; no possible sacrifice could discharge it. He marvelled how people could insist upon the duty of children to parents. But did not the habit of thought ally itself naturally enough with that strange religion in which, under direst penalties, exacts from groaning and travailing humanity a tribute and fear of love to the imagined Author of its being?

"With delight he followed every step in the growth of understanding; and yet it was not all pleasure to watch the mind outgrowing its simplicity. Intelligence that has learned the meaning of a doubt compares but sadly with the charm of untouched ingenuousness--that exquisite moment (a moment, and no more) when simplest thought and simplest word seek each other unconsciously, and blend in sweetest music. At four years old Hughie had forgotten his primitive language. The father regretted many a pretty turn of tentative speech, which he was wont to hear with love's merriment. If a toy were lost, a little voice might be heard saying, 'Where has that gone now to?' And when it was found again--'That is it!' After a tumble one day, Hughie was cautious in running. 'I shall fall down and break myself.' Then came distinction between days of the week. 'On Sunday I do' so and so; 'on Monday days I do' something else. He said, 'Do you remember?' and what a pity it seemed when at last the dull grown-up word was substituted. Never again, when rain was falling, would Hughie turn and plead, 'Father, tell the sun to come out!' Nor, when he saw the crescent moon in

turned himself alone, struck to the latest trifling when he realized the immense debt due from him to his son; no possible sacrifice could discharge it. He marvelled how people could insist upon the duty of children to parents. But did not the habit of thought ally itself naturally enough with that strange religion in which, under direct penalties, exerts from growing and travelling humanity a tribute and fear of love to the

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"With delight he followed every step in the growth of understanding; and yet it was not all pleasure to watch the mind growing its simplicity. Intelligence that has learned the meaning of a doubt compares but sadly with the charm of untroubled ingenueness--that exquisite moment (a moment, and no more) when simplest thought and simplest word seek each other unscolded solemnly, and blend in sweetest music. At four years old Hughie had forgotten his primitive language. The father regretted many a pretty turn of tentative speech, which he was wont to best with love's excitement. It a toy were lost, a little voice might be heard saying, 'Where has that gone now?' And when it was found again--'That is it!' After a trifle one day, Hughie was cautious in running. 'I shall fall down and break myself.' Then came distinction between days of the week. 'On Sunday I do' no and 'so; on Monday days I do' something else. He said, 'Do you remember?' and what a pity it seemed when at last the half grown-up word was substituted. Never again, when rain was falling, would Hughie turn and plead, 'Father, tell the sun to come out!' Not, when he saw the crescent moon in

daytime, would he ever grow troubled and exclaim, 'Some one has broken it!'

"It was the rule now that before his bedtime, seven o'clock, Hughie spent an hour in the library, alone with his father. A golden hour, sacred to memories of the world's own childhood. He brought with him the book that was his evening's choice--Grimm, or Anderson, or Aesop. Already he knew by heart a score of little poems, or passages of verse, which Rolfe, disregarding the inept volumes known as children's anthologies, chose with utmost care from his favorite singers, and repeated till they were learnt. Stories from the Odyssey had come in of late; but Polyphemus was a doubtful experiment--Hughie dreamed of him. Great caution, too, was needed in the matter of pathos. On hearing for the first time Anderson's tale of the Little Tin Soldier, Hughie burst into tears, and could scarce be comforted. Grimm was safer; it seemed doubtful whether Anderson was really a child's book at all, every page touched with the tears of things, every line melodious with sadness.¹

"And all this fostering of the imagination--was it right? was it wise? Harvey worried himself with doubts insoluble. He had merely obeyed his own instincts. But perhaps he would be doing far better if he never allowed the child to hear a fairy tale or a line of poetry. Why not amuse his mind with facts?

1. The following extract is from the author's diary dated January 23, 1896:

"Busy with boy all day. Bought him Anderson's tales, and at night read him some, with curious results. First came The Tin Soldier. This amused him, but, at the close, left him grave and troubled. Then The Ugly Duckling. Here I noticed reddening eyes, and a distress hardly relieved by the close. Lastly, The Whipping Top and the Ball. When it came to the ball being left in the dust-bin, the poor little chap burst into tears, and was with difficulty consoled." (Letters of George Gissing, p. 350.)

and the other, which was given to the other, and the other

and the other, which was given to the other, and the other

"It was the first time that I had seen him, never before."

In the room, about the middle of the room, there was a table.

On the table, seated in a chair, was the woman's own child.

He was sitting with his back to the door, and his head was bowed.

Behind him, on the wall, was a picture of a woman, a woman

of the same age, or perhaps a little older, with a serious

expression, and a look of sadness, and a look of

grief, and a look of despair, and a look of

hope, and a look of love, and a look of

kindness, and a look of gentleness, and a look of

patience, and a look of understanding, and a look of

compassion, and a look of sympathy, and a look of

mercy, and a look of forgiveness, and a look of

peace, and a look of joy, and a look of

happiness, and a look of contentment, and a look of

gratitude, and a look of praise, and a look of

worship, and a look of adoration, and a look of

reverence, and a look of awe, and a look of

fear, and a look of trembling, and a look of

astonishment, and a look of wonder, and a look of

amazement, and a look of surprise, and a look of

The following is a list of the names of the children of

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train him to the habit of scientific thought? For all he knew, he might be giving the child a bias which would result in a life's unhappiness; by teaching him to see only the hard actual face of things, would he not fit him far more surely for citizenship of the world?"¹

In the passage below we are reminded of some of the thoughts expressed in Henry Ryecroft,² which the author began almost immediately upon the completion of Our Friend the Charlatan. Lord Dymchurch had grown tired of the chatter of London society and found rest in the country lanes:

"He lived on in the silent house, quite alone and desiring no companionship. Few letters came for him, and he rarely saw a newspaper. After awhile he was able to forget himself in the reading of books which tranquillised his thought, and held him far from the noises of the passing world. So sequestered was the old grey house that he could go forth when he chose into lanes and meadows without fear of encountering any one who would disturb his meditation and his enjoyment of nature's beauty. Through the mellow days of the declining summer he lived amid trees and flowers, slowly recovering health and peace in places where a bird's note, or the ripple of a stream, or the sighing of a wind, were the only sounds under the everchanging sky.....

"The things which had so much occupied him during the last year of two, its perils and its needs, were now but seldom in his mind; he felt himself ripening to that 'wise passiveness' which, through all his intellectual disquiet, he had regarded as the unattainable ideal....Now-a-days he gave much of his

1. The Whirlpool, p. 383

2. Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, p. 163

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1. The Whirlpool, p. 283.
2. Private Papers of Henry Everett, p. 163.

thought to Wordsworth, content to study without the joy of imitating. Whether he could do anything, whether he could bear witness in any open way to what he held the truth, must still remain uncertain; sure it was that a profound distrust of himself in every practical direction, a very humble sense of follies committed and dangers barely escaped, would for a long time make him a silent and solitary man. He hoped that some way might be shown him, some modest yet clear way, by following which he would live not wholly for himself; but he had done forever with schemes of social regeneration, with political threats, all high-sounding words and phrases. It might well prove that the work appointed him was simply to live as an honest man. Was that so easy, or such a little thing?

"....How many of these loud talkers believed the words they uttered, or had found them in their own minds? And how many preachers of socialism--in this, that, or the other form--had in truth the socialistic spirit? Lashmar, with his emphasis on the universal obligation of social service--was he not simply an ambitious struggler and intriguer, careless of everything but his own advancement? Probably enough. And, on the whole, was there ever an age so rank with individualism as this of ours, which chatters ceaselessly of self-subdual to the common cause?

"('I, too,' he thought, 'am as much an individualist as the others. If I said that I care a rap for mankind at large, I should be phrase-making. Only, thank Heaven! I don't care to advertise myself, I don't care to make money. I only ask to be

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left alone, and to satisfy in a quiet way my sense of self-respect."¹

In Workers in the Dawn we have the first in a series of unhappy marriages:

In the scenes between the hero and his wife, who cannot refrain from drink and who finds the lessons set by her patient lover so far beyond her power that she becomes angry and fearful, Gissing strikes the note of his own experience--the marriage of a refined man with a girl who is either of a lower spiritual order or who is deficient in culture. In Arthur's generosity to the girl whom he married we have the author's opinion that it was both noble and disastrous:

"Carrie was all radiance at once, and as pretty a lover's tattle followed as novelist might wish to chronicle; but--somehow or other I have no taste for it. Perhaps the shadow of coming events falls already upon me and makes me gloomy."²

Two marriages in New Grub Street echo those of Gissing's. Reardon's wife fails to give him any support with her sympathy; instead, her criticism of his failures and misgivings only serve to increase the difficulty under which he is living.

Alfred Yule also marries a girl who makes him an unsatisfactory mate. He never forgets, or lets her forget, that her low birth and ignorance are the reasons why he has not succeeded.

For the fact that both Yule and Reardon, like himself, should marry beneath them Gissing offers this reason and justification:

"Educated girls have a pronounced distaste for London garrets;

1. Our Friend the Charlatan, pages 363, 364, 368
(Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1901)
2. Workers in the Dawn, p. 127

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low birth and ignorance are the reasons why he has not succeeded.

For the fact that both Yale and Reardon, like himself, should

marry beneath them Glasing offers this reason and justification:

"Educated girls have a pronounced distaste for London factories;

not one in fifty thousand would share poverty with the brightest genius ever born. Seeing that marriage is so often indispensable to that very success which would enable a man of parts to mate equally, there is nothing for it but to look below one's own level, and be grateful to the untaught woman who has pity on one's loneliness."¹

In The Odd Women is an account of the unhappy result of the marriage of a thoughtful man to a shallow and thoughtless woman:

"'Then there's another friend of yours whose marriage has been unfortunate,' said the hostess. 'They tell me that Mr. Orchard has forsaken his wife, and without intelligible reason.'"
"'There, too, I can offer an explanation,' replied Barfoot quietly. 'Though you may doubt whether it justifies him. I met Orchard a few months ago in Alexandria, met him by chance in the street, and didn't recognize him until he spoke to me. He was worn to skin and bone. I found that he had abandoned all his possessions to Mrs. Orchard, and just kept himself alive on casual work for the magazines, wandering about the shores of the Mediterranean like an uneasy spirit. He showed me the thing he had last written, and I see it is published in this month's Macmillan. Do read it. An exquisite description of a night in Alexandria. One of these days he will starve to death. A pity; he might have done fine work.'

"'But we await your explanation. What business has he to desert his wife and children?'

1. New Grub Street, p. 97

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A pity; he might have done fine work."

"But we await your explanation. What business has he to
desert his wife and children?"

"Let me give an account of a day I spent with him at Tintern, not long before I left England. He and his wife were having a holiday there, and I called on them. We went to walk about the Abbey. Now, for some two hours,--I will be strictly truthful,--whilst we were in the midst of that lovely scenery, Mrs. Orchard discoursed unceasingly of one subject--the difficulty she had with her domestic servants. Ten or twelve of these handmaidens were marshalled before our imagination; their names, their ages, their antecedents, the wages they received, were carefully specified.

We listened to a catalogue raisonne of the plates, cups and other utensils they had broken. We heard of the enormities which in each case led to their dismissal. Orchard tried repeatedly to change the subject, but only with the effect of irritating his wife. What could he or I do but patiently give ear? Our walk was ruined, but there was no help for it. Now, be good enough, to extend this kind of thing over a number of years. Picture Orchard sitting down in his home to literary work, and liable at any moment to an invasion from Mrs. Orchard, who comes to tell him, at great length, that the butcher has charged for a joint they have not consumed--or something of that kind. He assured me that his choice lay between flight and suicide, and I firmly believed him,"¹

On the subject of marriage Barfoot observes:

"Our Civilization in this point has always been absurdly defective. Men have kept women at a barbarous stage of develop-

1. The Odd Women, p. 91, (Macmillan, New York, 1893)

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ment, and then complain that they are barbarous. In the same way society does its best to create a criminal class, and then rages against the criminals. But, you see, I am one of the men, and an impatient one too. The mass of women I see about me are so contemptible that, in my haste, I use unjust language. Put yourselves in the man's place. Say that there are a million or so of us very intelligent and highly educated. Well, the women of corresponding mind number perhaps a few thousand. The vast majority of men must make a marriage that is doomed to be a dismal failure. We fall in love it is true; but do we really deceive ourselves about the future?

A very young man may; why, we know of very young men who are so frantic as to marry girls of the working class--mere lumps of human flesh. But most of us know that our marriage is a pis aller."¹

Here again is Gissing in a characteristic mood, very intent upon expressing the things which stand clear in his mind:

"If every novelist could be strangled and thrown into the sea we should have some chance of reforming women. The girl's nature was corrupted with sentimentality, like that of all but every woman who is intelligent enough to read what is called the best fiction, but not intelligent enough to understand its vice. Love-love-love; a sickening sameness of vulgarity. What is more vulgar than the ideal of novelists? They won't represent the actual world; it would be too dull for their readers. In real life, how many men and women fall in love? Not one in every ten thousand, I am convinced. Not

1. The Odd Women, p. 74

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one pair in ten thousand have felt for each other as two or three couples do in every novel. There is the sexual instinct, of course, but that is quite a different thing; the novelist daren't talk about that. The paltry creatures daren't tell the one truth that would be profitable. The result is that women imagine themselves noble and glorious when they are most near the animals."¹

Miss Barfoot expresses Gissing's viewpoint on the rights of women:²

"....Our proper world is the world of intelligence, of honest effort, of moral strength. The old types of womanly perfection are no longer helpful to us. Like the Church Service, which to all but one person in a thousand has become meaningless gabble by dint of repetition, these types have lost their effect. They are no longer educational. We have to ask ourselves: What course of training will wake women up, make them conscious of their souls, startle them into healthy activity?

"It must be something new, something free from the reproach of womanliness....Most likely we shall have a revolution in the social order greater than any that yet seems possible. Let it come, and let us help its coming. When I think of the contemptible wretchedness of women enslaved by custom, by their weakness, by their desires, I am ready to cry: Let the world perish in tumult rather than things go on in this way!....There must be a new type of woman, active in every sphere of life: a new worker out in the world, a new ruler of the home. Of the old

1. The Odd Women, p. 101

2. Letters of George Gissing, p. 89

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"Our proper world is the world of intelligence, of honest effort, of moral strength. The old types of womanly perfection are no longer helpful to us. Like the Church Service, which to all but one person in a thousand has become meaningless, capable by dint of repetition, these types have lost their effect. They are no longer educational. We have to ask ourselves: What course of training will wake women up, make them conscious of their souls, startle them into healthy activity?

"It must be something new, something free from the reproach of womanliness.... Most likely we shall have a revolution in the social order greater than any that yet seems possible. Let it come, and let us help its coming. When I think of the countless pitiful wretchedness of women enslaved by custom, by their weakness, by their desires, I am ready to cry: Let the world perish in tumult rather than things go on in this way!.... There must be a new type of woman, active in every sphere of life: a new worker out in the world, a new ruler of the home. Of the old

ideal virtues we can retain many, but we have to add to them those which have been thought appropriate only in men. Let a woman be gentle, but at the same time let her be strong; let her be pure of heart, but none the less wise and instructed. Because we have to set an example to the sleepy of our sex, we must carry on an active warfare, must be invaders. Whether woman is the equal of man, I neither know nor care. We are not his equal in size, in weight, in muscle, and, for all I can say, we may have less power of brain. That has nothing to do with it. Enough for us to know that our natural growth has been stunted. The mass of women have always been paltry creatures, and their paltriness has proved a curse to men,--So, if you like to put it in this way, we are working for the advantage of men as well as for our own. Let the responsibility for disorder rest on those who have made us despise our old selves. At any cost--at any cost--we will free ourselves from the heritage of weakness and contempt!"¹

Gissing comments In the Year of Jubilee upon yet another man unfortunate in his marriage:

"Before his marriage he had thought of women as domestic beings. A wife was the genius of home. He knew men who thanked their wives for all the prosperity and content that they enjoyed. Others he knew who told quite a different tale, but these surely were sorrowful exceptions. Nowadays he saw the matter in a light of fuller experience. In his rank of life married unhappiness was a sure thing, and the fault could generally be traced to wives who had no sense of responsibility, no

1. The Odd Women, p. 137

ideal virtues we can retain many, but we have to add to them those which have been thought appropriate only in men. Let a woman be gentle, but at the same time let her be strong; let her be pure of heart, but none the less wise and instructed. But because we have to set an example to the slavery of our sex, we must carry on an active warfare, must be invaders. Whether woman is the equal of man, I neither know nor care. We are not his equal in size, in weight, in muscle, and, for all I can say, we may have less power of brain. That has nothing to do with it. Enough for us to know that our natural growth has been stunted. The mass of women have always been pality creatures, and their paltiness has proved a curse to men.--So, if you like to put it in this way, we are working for the advantage of men as well as for our own. Let the responsibility for disorder rest on those who have made us desecrate our old selves. At any cost--at any cost--we will free ourselves from the heritage of weakness and contempt!"

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understanding of household duties, no love of simple pleasure, no religion."¹

In Will Warburton Gissing makes a final protest against certain evils which had always been a source of bitterness to him; chiefly, the habit of mind that would rather complain of the petty troubles of housekeeping than set things silently to rights and so avoid untold misery. Mrs. Cross had one such mind:

"Time would have weighed heavily on Mrs. Cross but for her one recreation, which was perennial, ever fresh, constantly full of surprise and excitement. Poor as she was, she contrived to hire a domestic servant--to say that she 'kept' one would come near to a verbal impropriety, seeing that no servant ever remained in the house for more than a few months, whilst it occasionally happened that the space of half a year would see a succession of some half dozen 'generals'. Underpaid and underfed, these persons (they varied in age from fourteen to forty) were, of course, incompetent, careless, rebellious, and Mr. Cross found the sole genuine pleasure of her life in the war she waged with them. Having no reasonable way of spending her hours, she was thus supplied with occupation; being of acrid temper she was thus supplied with a subject upon whom she could fearlessly exercise it; being remarkably mean of disposition, she saw in the paring-down of her servant's rations to a working minimum at once profit and sport; lastly, being fond of the most trivial gossip, she had a never-failing topic of discussion

1. In the Year of Jubilee, p. 109 (A. L. Burt Co. New York)

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most trivial gossip, she had a never-failing topic of discussion

with such ladies as could endure her society.

"When her mother had been wearying of her for half an hour with complaints and lamentations over the misdoings of one Emma, Bertha, as the alternative to throwing up her hands and rushing out of the house, began laughing to herself, whereat Mrs. Cross indignantly begged to be informed what there was so very amusing in a state of affairs which would assuredly bring her to her grave.

"'If only you could see the comical side of it, mother,' replied Bertha. 'It really has one, you know. Emma, if only you would be patient with her, is a well-meaning creature, and she says the funniest things. I asked her this morning if she didn't think she could find some way of remembering to put the salt on the table. And she looked at me very solemnly, and said, 'Indeed I will, Miss. I'll put it into my prayers, just after 'our daily bread.'

"'What nonsense you talk, child ! Are we to live in dirt and disorder? Am I never to correct a servant, or teach her her duties? But, of course, everything I do is wrong. Of course you could do everything so very much better. That's what children are nowadays.'"

E--Selections giving his ideas on education

Already beset with misgivings as to the effect of education upon Modern England, the author permits the following paragraph from the pen of Kingcote:

"I delight in the conditions of rustic life as it exists

1. Will Warburton, p.132 (Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1905)

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"When her mother had been weeping of her for half an hour with complaints and lamentations over the misdoings of the same, as the alternative of throwing her name and washing out of the house, began laughing to herself, whilst Mrs. Cross indignantly begged to be informed what there was so very amusing in a state of affairs which would assuredly bring her to her grave."

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"What nonsense you talk, child! Are we to live in dirt and disorder? Am I never to correct a servant, or teach her her duties? But, of course, everything I do is wrong. Of course you could do everything so very much better. That's what children are nowadays."

E--Selections giving his ideas on education

Already beset with misgivings as to the effect of education upon Modern England, the author permits the following paragraph from the pen of Kingsley:

"I delight in the conditions of wretched life as it exists

here about me. The absence of any hint of townish Radicalism is a joy to me; I had not expected to find the old order so undisturbed. It is not beautiful, but how wholesome ! If only the school master could be kept away; if only progress would work its evils on the children of the slums, and leave these in their ancient peace ! They are happy.....Would I had been born one of these, and had never learned the half-knowledge which turns life¹ sour !"

His view of education is to be found again in this book:

"I am quite sure that education makes life very much harder to live. That is why I don't hold to educating the poor--not beyond reading and writing. Without education life is very plain, though it may be a struggle. But from what I have seen of highly-taught people, I'm very sure they suffer worse in their² minds than the poor ever do in their bodies."

F--Selections expressive of Gissing's attitude toward things military, and war:

"Not many days later Mrs. Stratton arrived at Knightswell, bringing her youngest boy, a ten-year old, whose absence from school was explained by recent measles. This lady was the wife of an officer at present with his regiment in Africa; her regret at the Colonel's remoteness, and her anxiety on his behalf in a time of savage warfare, were tempered by that spirit of pride in things military which so strongly infuses a certain type of the British matron, destined to bring forth barbarians and heroes. At the age of forty Mrs. Stratton had four children, all boys;

1. Isobel Clarendon, p.263

2. In the Year of Jubilee, p.107

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is a joy to me; I had not expected to find the old order so un-
disturbed. It is not beautiful, but how wholesome! It only the
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Selections expressive of Gladstone's attitude towards things
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at the Colonel's remoteness, and her anxiety on his behalf in
a time of savage warfare, were tinged by that spirit of pride
in things military which so strongly induces a certain type of
the British nation, destined to bring forth barbarians and heroes.
At the age of forty Mrs. Stratton had four children, all boys;

the two eldest were already at Woolwich and Sandhurst respectively, the third at Harrow, extracting such strategic science as Thucydides could supply, boastful of a name traceable in army lists three generations back. These four lads were offspring whereof no British matron could feel ashamed: perfect in physical development, striking straight from the shoulder, with skulls to resist a tomahawk, red-cheeked and hammer fisted. In the nursery they had fought each other to the tapping of noses; at school they fought all and sundry up through every grade of pugilistic championship. From infancy they handled the fowling piece, and killed with a coolness of hereditary talent. Side by side they walked in quick step, as to the beating of a drum; eyes direct, as looking along a barrel; ears pricked for the millionth echo of an offensive remark. At cricket they drove cannon-balls; milder games were the target of their scorn. Admirable British youths !"¹

Harvey Rolfe and Hugh Carnaby are declaiming against modern civilization and the limitations which it imposes on man, when Rolfe says:

"There's more than that to do in South Africa.....Who believes for a moment that England will remain satisfied with bits here and there? We have to swallow the whole, of course. We shall go on fighting and annexing until--until the decline and fall of the British Empire. That hasn't begun yet. Some of us are so over-civilized that it makes a reaction of wholesome barbarism in the rest. We shall fight like blazes in the twentieth

1. Isobel Clarendon, p.47

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Harvey Rolfe and Hugh Cornaby are declining against modern civilization and the limitations which it imposes on man, when Rolfe says:

"There's more than what to do in South Africa.... Who believes for a moment that England will remain satisfied with peace here and there? We have to swallow the whole, of course. We shall go on fighting and annexing until the decline and fall of the British Empire. That hasn't begun yet. Some of us are so over-civilized that it makes a reaction of wholesome barbarism in the East. We shall fight like beasts in the twentieth

century. It's the only thing that keeps Englishmen sound--commercialism is their curse. Happily, no sooner do they get fat than they kick, and somebody's skin suffers; then they fight off the excessive flesh. War is England's banting !'"¹

G--Selections showing Gissing's attitude toward commercialism and the classes

The following is a description of the vast money-making machines of modern civilization which Gissing feared was ruining England:

"The weather was hot; one should have been far away from these huge rampant-streets, these stifling burrows of common. But here toil and stress went on as usual, and Piers Otway saw it all in a lurid light. These towering edifices with inscriptions numberless, announcing every imaginable form of trade with every corner of the world; here a vast building, consecrate in all its commercial magnificence, great windows and haughty doorways, the gleam of gilding and of brass, the lustre of polished woods, to a single company or firm; here a huge structure which housed on its many floors a crowd of enterprises, names by the score signalled at the foot of the gaping staircase; arrogant suggestions of triumph side by side with desperate beginnings; titles of world-wide significance meeting the eye at every turn, vulgar names with more weight than those of princes, words in small lettering which ruled the fate of millions of men;--no nightmare was ever so crushing to one in Otway's mood. The brute force of money; the negation of the individual--these, the evils

1. The Whirlpool, p.16

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U--Selections showing Gissing's attitude toward commercialism
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The following is a description of the vast money-making
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But here toll and stress went on as usual, and Fiers Gwasy saw
it all in a lurid light. These towering edifices with intricate
tions numberless, encompassing every imaginable form of trade with
every corner of the world; here a vast building, consecrated in
all its commercial magnificence, great windows and haughty doors
ways, the glass of gliding and of brass, the lattice of polished
woods, to a single company of firms; here a huge structure which
housed on its many floors a crowd of enterprises, massed by the
score aligned at the foot of the gazing staircases; arrogant
suggestions of triumph side by side with desperate beginnings;
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Vulgar names with more weight than those of princes, words in
small letters which ruled the chaos of millions of men;--no night-
mare was ever so crushing to one in Gwasy's mood. The brute
force of money; the negation of the individual--these, the evils

of our time, found their supreme expression in the City of London. Here was opulence at home and superb; here must poverty lurk and shrink; feeling itself alive only on sufferance; the din of highway and byway was a voice of blustering conquest, bidding the weaker to stand aside or be crushed. Here no man was a human being, but each merely a portion of an inconceivably complicated mechanism. The shiny-hatted figure who rushed or sauntered, gloomed by himself at corners or made one of a talking group, might elsewhere be found a reasonable and kindly person, with traits, peculiarities; here one could see in him nothing but a money-maker of this or that class, ground to a certain pattern. The smooth working of the huge machine made it only the more sinister; one had but to remember what cold tyranny, what elaborate fraud, were served by its manifold ingenuities, only to think of the cries of anguish stifled by its monotonous roar.¹

Gissing's hardened attitude toward commercialism Mr. Wyvern expresses: "The commercial class.....the supremely maleficient. They hold us at their mercy, and their mercy is nought. Monstrously hypo-critical, they cry for progress when they mean increased opportunities of swelling their own purposes at the expense of those they employ and of these they serve; vulgar to the core, they exalt a gross ideal of well-being, and they slink in their prosperity. The very poor and the uncommercial wealthy alike suffer from them; the intellect of the country is poisoned by their influence. They it is who indeed are oppress-

1. The Crown of Life, p.97 (Methuen & Co. Ltd. London, 1927)
Gissing wrote his sister: "You are quite right about the disastrous effect of too much wealth. I have grave fears that England is being ruined by this--this and excessive poverty."
--Letters of George Gissing, p.395

ers; they grow rich on the toil of poor girls in London garrets¹ and of men who perish prematurely to support their children."

We have here what would seem to be Gissing's ideal business man: "He sees commerce from the human point of view, not as the brutal pitiless struggle which justifies every form of ferocity and low cunning. I never knew him utter an ignoble thought about trade and money-making.....He is a lesson in civilization. If trade is not to put an end to human progress it must be pursued in Moncharmont's spirit."²

The general trend of thought running throughout Demos is summed up in the words of Mr. Wyvern, when speaking to Hubert Eldon:

"One of the pet theories I have developed for myself in recent years is, that happiness is very evenly distributed among all classes and conditions. It is the result of sober reflection on my own experience of life. The bulk of men are neither rich nor poor, taking into consideration their habits and needs; they live in much content, despite the ills of nature. Above and below are classes of extreme characterization; I believe the happiness assignable to those who are the lowest stratum of civilization is, relatively speaking, no whit less than that we may attribute to the thin stratum of the surface, using the surface to mean the exceedingly rich. The life of the very poorest is a struggle to support their bodies; the richest, relieved of that one anxiety, are overwhelmed with such a mass of artificial troubles that their few moments of genuine repose

1. Demos, p.307 (Smith & Co., London, 1890)

2. The crown of Life, p.156 (Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1899)

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of artificial troubles that their few moments of genuine repose

do not exceed those vouchsafed to their antipodes. It is a mistake due to mere thoughtlessness, or ignorance, to imagine the labouring, or even the destitute, population as ceaselessly groaning beneath the burden of their existence. Go along the poorest street in the East End of London, and you will hear as much laughter, witness as much gaiety, as in any thoroughfare of the West. Laughter and gaiety of a miserable kind? I speak of it as a relative to the habits and capabilities of the people..... Take one feature of progress--universal education. That, I believe, works most patently for the growing misery I speak of. Its results affect all classes, and all for the worse. I said that I used to have a very bleeding of the heart for the half-clothed and quarter-fed hangers on to civilization: I think far less of them now than of another class in appearance much better off. It is a class created by the mania of education, and it consists of those unhappy men and women whom unspeakable cruelty endows with intellectual needs whilst refusing them the sustenance they are taught to crave. Another generation, and this class will be terribly extended, its existence blighting the whole social state. Every one of these poor creatures has a right to curse the work of those who clamour progress, and pose as benefactors of the race.¹

In Mr. Tollady Gissing speaks of the rich who have the power to do much good if they choose, and of the clergy, who do not rebuke the rich for neglecting their opportunity:²

"Did you ever reflect that there are men in England whose

1. Demos, p.297

2. Letters of George Gissing, p.156

to not exceed those restricted to their limitations. It is a
mistake due to mere thoughtlessness, or ignorance, to imagine
the laboring, or even the destitute, population as necessarily
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I
In Mr. Tolstoy's "The Kingdom of God is Within You" he says the
poor do as much good as they choose, and of the clergy, who
do not receive the right for neglecting their opportunity:
"Did you ever believe that there are men in England whose

private wealth would suffice to buy up every one of the vile slums we have just been traversing, and build fresh, healthy streets in their place, and the men still remain wealthy? To me it is one of the most fearful marvels of the time, that among such countless millionaires scarcely one arises in a generation actuated with the faintest shade of philanthropist.....Do not ask what such a man could perform; ask rather what he could not ! He could not make mankind wise, or learned, or good in an instant, but what aid could he give them in their united struggle towards wisdom, learning, goodness ! What help could he afford in a million cases to struggling, suffering, despairing merit; how could he lessen the inmates of hospital, goal, asylum; what glorious service would he perform in the cause of humanity by the mere spectacle of such enlightened benevolence ! And the preachers ! I declare, I wonder how our preachers can walk the streets at the present day and not shrink in confusion and shame from the sights which meet their eyes on every hand. How many of them are there who in their sermons dare to speak out to the rich members of their congregation and rebuke them manfully for neglect of their opportunities?"

The following would show that the rich alone are not to blame; and, incidentally the description of Arthur's life in undesirable lodgings is not unlike that of Gissing's early life:

"'Good God !' he exclaimed, 'this is intolerable ! Have they got half the inhabitants of the Zoological Gardens to dinner downstairs? Every five minutes I hear such a hideous

1. Workers in the Dawn, Vol. 1, p.21

private wealth would suffice to buy up every one of the vile
 things we have just been traversing, and build fresh, healthy
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 by the mere spectacle of such enlightened benevolence? And the
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 streets at the present day and not shrink in confusion and
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 many of them are there who in their barren days to speak out
 to the rich members of their congregation and rebuke them man-
 fully for neglect of their opportunities?"

The following would show that the rich alone are not to
 blame and, incidentally the description of Arthur's life in
 undesirable lodgings is not unlike that of Gladstone's early life:
 "Good God!" he exclaimed, "this is intolerable! Have
 they got half the inhabitants of the Zoological Gardens to
 dinner tomorrow? Every five minutes I hear such a hideous

roaring that I am almost driven mad. I have a headache to begin with.'

"'You may well ask whether they are beasts!', replied Mark, 'As I came along the passage the front room door was open, and I never set eyes on such a scene in my life. There must be twenty people there, and I'm quite sure they're all drunk. I had only time to notice one thing, and that was old Pettindund at one side of the table and another man opposite to him, holding a goose, or something of the kind, by its legs, and ripping it in two between them !'

"'Brutes !' replied Arthur, in a tone of disgust. 'Do not such blackguards as these give good cause to the upper classes to speak of us working-men with contempt? I warrant they waste as much money to day in guzzling and swilling as would give twenty or thirty poor starving wretches a good dinner for a week to come. Mr. Challenger, I think I must leave this house. I do indeed. If this sort of thing is to go on all through Christmas week, as no doubt it will, I shall be driven mad. I seem to have become irritable of late, and nervous.'"¹

1. Workers in the Dawn, p.431

roaring that I am almost driven mad. I have a headache to begin with.

"You may well ask whether they are beasts," replied Mary. "As I came along the passage the front room door was open, and I never set eyes on such a scene in my life. There must be twenty people there, and I'm quite sure they're all drunk. I had only time to notice one thing, and that was old Pettibon at one side of the table and another man opposite to him, holding a goose, or something of the kind, by its legs, and ripping it in two between them!"

"Butter!" replied Arthur, in a tone of disgust. "Do not such blackguards as these give good names to the upper classes to speak of us working-men with contempt? I warrant they waste as much money to day in gambling and swilling as would give twenty or thirty poor starving wretches a good dinner for a week to come. Mr. Chalenger, I think I must leave this house. I do indeed. If this sort of thing is to go on all through Christmas week, as no doubt it will, I shall be driven mad. I seem to have become irritable of late, and nervous."

H--Selection showing his attitude toward 'sport'.¹

Here is the author's opinion of English 'sport':

"Later that afternoon, the two friends climbed the great hillside above the Castle, and rambled far over the moorland, to a windy height where they looked into deep wild Swaledale. Their talk was only of the scenes around them, until, on their way back, they approached a line of three-walled shelters, built of rough stone, about the height of a man. In reply to Irene's question, Helen explained the use of these structures; she did so in an offhand way, with the proper terms, and would have passed on, but Irene stood gazing, "'What ! They lie in ambush here, whilst the men drive the birds towards them, to be shot?'"

"'It's sport,' rejoined the other indifferently.

"'I see. And here are the old cartridges.' A heap of them lay close by amid the ling. 'I don't wonder that Mr. March seemed a little ashamed of himself.'

"'It amazes me,' Irene continued, subduing her voice. 'Incredible that men can come up here just to bang guns and see beautiful birds fall dead ! One would think that what they saw here would stop their hands--that this silence would fill their minds and hearts and make it impossible. What barbarians !'

"'Yet you know they are nothing of the kind,' objected Helen. 'At least, not all of them.'

"'Mr. March?--You called him, yourself, a fine barbarian, quoting from Matthew Arnold. I never before understood how true that description was.'

1. Letters of George Gissing, p.96

H-Selection showing his attitude toward 'sport'.
Here is the author's opinion of English 'sport':

"Later that afternoon, the two friends climbed the great
hillside above the Castle, and tramped far over the moorland,
to a windy height where they looked into deep wild Swaledale.
Their talk was only of the scenes around them, until, on their
way back, they approached a line of three-walled shelter, built
of rough stone, about the height of a man. In reply to Irene's
question, Helen explained the use of these structures; she did
so in an offhand way, with the proper terms, and would have
passed on, but Irene stood gazing, "What! They live in ambush
here, whilst the men drive the birds towards them, to be shot?"

"It's sport," rejoined the other indifferently.

"I see. And here are the old cartridges." A heap of

them lay close by said the King. "I don't wonder that Mr.

Wrench scooped a little ahead of himself."

"If I answer me," Irene continued, adding her voice.

"Incredible that men can come up here just to hang guns and see
beautiful birds fall dead! One would think that what they saw
here would stop their hands--that this silence would fill their
minds and hearts and make it impossible. What barbarians!"

"Yet you know they are not of the kind," objected

Helen. "At least, not all of them."

"Mr. Wrench?--You called him, yourself, a fine barbarian,"

quoting from Matthew Arnold. I never before understood how

true that description was."

"I assure you, it doesn't apply to him, whatever I may have said in joke. This shooting is the tradition of a certain class. It's one of the ways in which great, strong men get their necessary exercise. Some of them feel, at moments, just as you do, I've no doubt; but there they are, a lot of them together, and a man can't make himself ridiculous, you know.'

"You're not like yourself in this, Helen,' said Irene. You're not speaking as you think. Another time, you'll confess it's abominable savagery, with not one good word to be said for it. And more contemptible than I ever suspected ! I'm so glad I've seen this. It helps to clear my thoughts about--about things in general.'"¹ Gibbon is a second-hand bookshop. It was I--Selections reminiscent of his love of Classics, and of Greece and Rome

In The Unclassed Julian Caste, who represents Gissing's friend Berz,² gives expression to his burning desire to visit Italy:

"You have been to Italy?' asked Waymark, with interest.

"A strange look came over Julian's features, a look at once bright and melancholy; his fine eyes gleamed as was their wont eight years ago in the back-parlour in Boston Street, when he was telling tales from Plutarch.

"Not,' he said, in a low voice charged with feeling, 'since I was three years old. You will think it strange, but I don't so long for the modern Italy, for the beautiful scenery and climate, not even for the Italy of Raphael, or of Dante.

1. Crown of Life, p.47

2. Dictionary of National Biography, supp. 2, Vol. II, George Gissing by Thomas Seccombe

"I assure you, it doesn't apply to him, whatever I may have said in joke. This shooting is the tradition of a certain class. It's one of the ways in which great, strong men get their necessary exercise. Some of them feel, at moments, just as you do, I've no doubt; but there they are, a lot of them together, and a man can't make himself ridiculous, you know."

"You're not like yourself in this, Helen," said Irene. "You're not speaking as you think. Another time, you'll confess it's a horrible savagery, with not one good word to be said for it. And more contemptible than I ever suspected! I'm so glad I've seen this. It helps to clear my thoughts about--about things in general."

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In The Unlabeled Julian Caspe, who represents Glasgow's friend Ben, gives expression to his burning desire to visit Italy:

"You have been to Italy?" asked Wynne, with interest. "A strange look came over Julian's features, a look at once bright and melancholy; his fine eyes gleamed as was their wont eight years ago in the back-parlor in Boston Street, when he was telling tales from Plutarch."

"Not," he said, in a low voice charged with feeling, "since I was three years old. You will think it strange, but I don't so long for the modern Italy, for the beautiful scenery and climate, not even for the Italy of Raphael, or of Dante."

I think most of the classical Italy. I am no scholar, but I love the Italian writers, and can forget myself for hours, working through Livy or Tacitus. I want to see the ruins of Rome; I want to see the Tiber; the Clitumnus, the Aufidus, the Alban Hills, Lake Trasimenus,--a thousand places ! It is strange how those old times have taken hold upon me. The mere names in Roman history make my blood warm.--And there is so little chance¹ that I shall ever be able to go there; so little chance.'

The following refers to the time when Gissing purchased a first edition of Gibbon at a second-hand book shop in London:²

"When he was eighteen, Julian had the good luck to light upon a cheap copy of Gibbon in a second-hand bookshop. It was the first edition; six noble quarto volumes, clean and firm in the old binding. Often he had turned longing eyes upon newer copies of the great book, but the price had always put them beyond his reach. That very night he solemnly laid open the first volume at the first page, propping it on a couple of meaner books, and, after glancing through the short Preface, began to read with a mind as devoutly disposed as that of any pious believer poring upon his Bible.....Far, far into the night Julian turned over page after page, thoughtless of sleep and the common-place duties of the morrow.

"Since then he had mastered his Gibbon, knew him from end to end, and joyed in him more than ever. Whenever he had a chance of obtaining any of the writers, ancient or modern, to whom Gibbon refers, he read them and added to his knowledge.

1. The Unclassed, Vol. I, p.69
2. Ryecroft Papers, p.35

I think most of the classical Italy. I am no scholar, but I love the Italian writers, and can forget myself for hours, working through Livy or Tacitus. I want to see the ruins of Rome; I want to see the Tiber; the Cliffs, the Islands, the Alban Hills, Lake Trasimene,--a thousand places! It is strange how those old times have taken hold upon me. The more names in Roman history make my blood warm.--And there is so little chance that I shall ever be able to go there; so little chance."

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"Since then he had mastered his Gibbon, knew him from end to end, and joyed in him more than ever. Whenever he had a chance of obtaining any of the writers, ancient or modern, to whom Gibbon refers, he read them and added to his knowledge.

About a year ago, he had picked up an old Claudian, and the reading of the poet had settled him to a task which he had before that doubtfully sought. He wanted to write either a poem or a drama, on some subject taken from the 'Decline and Fall', and now, with Claudian's help he fixed upon Stilicho for his hero. The form, he then decided, should be dramatic. Upon 'Stilicho' he had now been engaged for a year, and tonight he is writing the last words of the last scene. Shortly after twelve he has finished it, and, throwing down his pen, he paces about the room with enviable feelings.

....."I have thought," said Julian, with embarrassment, 'of a long poem--an Epic. Virgil wrote of the founding of Rome; her dissolution is as grand a subject. It would mean years of preparation, and again years in the writing. The siege and capture¹ of Rome by Alaric--what do you think?'"

Biffen and Reardon both love the classics. On a Sunday the former visited Reardon and asked some such question: "'I want to know how you scan this chorus in the Oedipus 'Rex'!" Reardon took the volume, considered, and began to read aloud with metric emphasis.

"Choriambics, eh?" cried the other. 'Possible, of course; but treat them as Ionics a minore with an anacrusis, and see if they don't go better.'

"He involved himself in terms of pedantry, and with such delight that his eyes gleamed. Having delivered a technical lecture, he began to read in illustration, producing quite a different

1. The Unclassed, Vol. I, p.73

About a year ago, he had picked up an old Clendinning, and the
reading of the poem had settled him to a task which he had
before that doubtfully sought. He wanted to write either a
poem or a drama, on some subject taken from the 'Decline and
Fall', and now, with Clendinning's help he fixed upon 'Slittish
for his name'. The form, he then decided, should be dramatic.
Upon 'Slittish' he had not been engaged for a year, and tonight
he is writing the last words of the last scene. Shortly after
twelve he has finished it, and, throwing down his pen, he
paces about the room with morbid feelings.

...."I have thought," said Arthur, with embarrassment, "of a
long poem--an epic. Virgil wrote of the founding of Rome; but
Clendinning is as good a subject. It would mean years of
preparation, and again years in the writing. The siege and capture
of Rome by Alaric--what do you think?"

Billy and Arthur both love the classics. On a Sunday
the former visited Arthur and asked some such question: "I
want to know how you mean this effort in the 'Decline and Fall'?"
"Arthur took the volume, considered, and began to read aloud
with certain emphasis.

"'Fortunabiles, ah!' cried the other. 'Possible, of course;
but treat them as I once treated with an anachronism, and see if
they don't go better.'"

"He involved himself in terms of pedantry, and with such delight
that his eyes gleamed. Having delivered a technical lecture,
he began to read in illustration, producing quite a different

effect from that of the rhythm as given by his friend. And the reading was by no means that of a pedant, rather of a poet.

"For half an hour the two men talked Greek metres as if they lived in a world where the only hunger known could be satisfied by grand or sweet cadences."¹

In Hilliard, a character in Eve's Ransom, we are reminded of Gissing in that he too loves books, and instead of investing his supper in a set of Gibbon,² he buys a set on the cathedrals of France, for he is interested in architecture.

Sleeping Fires embodied material gathered on the author's tour in Greece in 1889. Langley's thoughts were his when he himself ascended Lycabettus:³

"His eyes wandered over the vast scene, where natural beauty and historic interest vied for the beholder's enthusiasm. Plain and mountain; city and solitude; harbour and wild shore; craggy islands and the far expanse of sea: a miracle of lights and hues, changing ever as cloudlets floated athwart the sun. From Parnes to the Argolic hills, what flight of gaze and of memory ! The comparisons stood mute, but it was the younger man who betrayed a lively pleasure.

"'What's the use,' he exclaimed at length, 'of reading history in books ! Standing here I learn more in five minutes than through all the grind of my school-time. Aegina--Salamis--Munychia--nothing but names and boredom; now I shall delight to remember them as long as I live ! Look at the white breakers on the shore of Salamis.--It's all so real to me now; and yet I

1. New Grub Street, p.149

2. Gissing tells of purchasing a set of Gibbon in Rycroft Papers, p.35

3. Letters of George Gissing, p.296

effect from that of the rhythm as given by his friend. And the reading was by no means that of a debutant, rather of a poet. "For half an hour the two men talked Greek metres as if they lived in a world where the only hunger known could be satisfied by grand or sweet cadences."

In Millard, a character in Ewa's romance, we are reminded of Gissing in that he too loves books, and instead of investing his supper in a set of Gibbon, he buys a set on the cathedral of France, for he is interested in architecture.

Georgina Eliza embodied material gathered on the author's tour in Greece in 1889. Langley's thoughts were not when he himself succeeded Lycabettus.

"His eyes wandered over the vast scene, where natural beauty and historic interest vied for the beholder's enthusiasm. Plain and mountain; city and solitudes; harbour and wild shore; straggly islands and the far expanse of sea: a miracle of lights and hues, changing ever as clouds float athwart the sun. From far to the Argolic hills, what flight of gaze and of memory! The comparisons stood mute, but it was the younger man who betrayed a lively pleasure."

"What's the use," he exclaimed at length, "of reading history in books! Standing here I learn more in five minutes than through all the grind of my school-time. Aegina--Salamis--Munychia--nothing but names and parades; now I shall delight to remember them as long as I live! Look at the white breakers on the shore of Salamis.--It's all so real to me now; and yet I

1. New York Street, p. 142
2. Gissing tells of purchasing a set of Gibbon in Harrold's Palace, p. 2
3. Letters of George Gissing, p. 205

never saw anything like these Greek landscapes for suggesting unreality. I felt something of this in Italy, but this is more wonderful. It struck me at the first sight of Greece, as we sailed in early morning along the Peloponnesus. It's the landscape you pick out of the clouds, at home in England. Again and again I have had to remind myself that these are real mountains and coasts.¹"

These are also his thoughts expressed in Langley:²

"These relics of the golden age of Hellas had always possessed a fascination for him; he had spent hours among them, dwelling with luxury of emotion on this or that favorite group, on a touching face or exquisite figure; ever feeling as he departed that on these dimple tablets was graven the noblest thought of man confronting death. No horror, no gloom, no unavailing lamentation; a tenderness of memory clinging to the homely life of those who live no more, a clasp of hands, the human symbolism of drooping eyes or face averted; all touched with that supreme yet simplest pathos of mortality resigned to fate."³

Truly Gissing took with him to Italy his vision of Italy. In every glimpse of Italian scenery which he uses in The Emancipated the spectacle is not simply one of the scene before his eyes, but it calls up all the thought of Rome. "With the help of sunshine and redwine, he could imagine that time had gone back twenty centuries--that this was not Pozzuoli, but Puteoli; that the men among the shipping called to each other

1. Sleeping Fires, p.55 (D.Appleton & Co. New York, 1896)
2. Letters of George Gissing, p.266
3. Sleeping Fires, p.66

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unrealism. I felt something of this in Italy, but this is more
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and again I have had to remind myself that these are real moun-
tains and coasts."

These are also his thoughts expressed in language.
"These relics of the golden age of Hellas had always
possessed a fascination for him; he had spent hours among them,
dwelling with luxury of emotion on this or that favorite group,
on a touching face or exquisite figure; ever feeling as he
departed that on these diaphanous tablets was graven the noblest
thought of man confronting death. No horror, no gloom, no
unavailing lamentation; a tenderness of memory clinging to the
homely life of these whittos no more, a clasp of hands, the
human symbolism of drooping eyes or face averted; all touched
with that supreme yet simplest pathos of mortality resigned to
fate."

Truly Gladys took with him to Italy his vision of Italy.
In every glimpse of Italian scenery which he was in The
Emancipated the spectacle is nobly and one of the scene before
his eyes, but it calls up all the thought of home. "With the
help of sunshine and red wine, he could imagine that time had
gone back twenty centuries--that this was not possible, but
futile; that the men among the shipping called to each other

1. Sleeping Beauty, p. 75 (D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1898).
2. Letters of George Eliot, p. 302.
3. Michaelmas, p. 68.

in Latin, and perchance had just heard some news of the perishing Republic."

His tender affection for the remains of classical times finds expression in this description of Paestum:

"This morning the English artist rose much later than usual, and strolled out idly into the spring sunshine, a rug thrown over his shoulder.....He made a long circuit by the old walls; now and then he paused to take a view of the temples, always with eye of grave meditation.....At length he went up into the Temple of Neptune, spread the rug on a spot where he had been accustomed, each day at noon, to eat his salame and drink his Calabrian wine, and seated himself against a column. Here he could enjoy a view from both ends of the ruin.....Dear and glorious temples ! sanctuaries still for all to whom poetry is religion. These stones, have they not echoed to Hellenic speech? When Latin worship had fled from them, when the Saracen had done his worst, when the Norman pirate had pillaged all he could to adorn his Christian Church at Amalfi, time and solitude became wonders of what remained, hallowing the austere beauty of these abandoned fanes to be a monument of the world where gods and men walked together."¹

Mallard likes those pictures of Raphael in the Loggia of the Vatican best just as Gissing did even when he copied them as a boy from outlines belonging to his father:²

"He did not finish the sentence, and they went into the pictured Loggia. Here, choosing one of his favourites, Mallard

1. The Emancipated, p.134

2. The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft, p.83

in Latin, and perhaps had just heard some news of the parish-
ing Republic."

His teacher affection for the remains of classical times

finds expression in this description of the temple:

"This morning the English artist rose much later than usual,

and strolled out idly into the spring sunshine; a rug thrown over

his shoulder....He made a long circuit by the old walls; now

and then he passed to take a view of the temple, always with

eye of grave meditation....At length he went up into the Temple

of Neptune, spread the rug on a spot where he had been accustomed

each day at noon, to eat his salmon and drink his Gallican wine

and leaned himself against a column. Here he could enjoy a view

from both ends of the town....Dear and glorious temples!

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when the Norman pirate had pillaged all he could to adorn his

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1

together."

Malraux likes those pictures of Raphael in the loggia of

the Vatican best just as Gissing did even when he copied them as

2

a boy from pictures belonging to his father:

"He did not finish the sentence, and threw into the

picture books. Here, choosing one of his favourites, Malraux

endeavoured to explain all his joy in them. He showed her how it was Hebrew history made into a series of exquisite and touching legends; he dwelt on the sweet, idyllic treatment, the lovely landscape, the tender idealism throughout, the perfect adaptedness of gem-like coloring--though that, of course, is not Raphael's hand. Jacob meeting Rachel at the well; Joseph telling his dream; the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedec--how the¹ essence of pastoral poetry is expressed in these groups !"

Again Mallard is expressing what Gissing himself felt:

"Each time that I have been in Rome, I have felt after the first few days, a peculiar mental calm. The other cities of Italy haven't the same effect upon me. Perhaps every one experiences it more or less. There comes back to me at moments the kind of happiness which I knew as a boy--a freedom from the sense of duties and responsibilities, of work to be done, and of disagreeable things to be faced; the kind of contentment I used to have when I was reading lives of artists, or looking at prints of famous pictures, or myself trying to draw. It is possible that this mood is not such a strange one with many people as with me; when it comes, I feel grateful to the powers that rule life. Since boyhood, I have never known it in the north. Out of Rome, perhaps only in fine weather on the Mediterranean. But in Rome is its perfection."²

Veranilda is full of very careful and distinguished historical writing, and is good evidence of the author's devotion to ancient things.³ Towards the end of the book the scene is laid

1. The Emancipated, p.93

2. " " 159

3. Letters of George Gissing, p.89--As early as January, 1881, Gissing wrote: "It is my ambition to write an historical novel some day."

at the Monastery of Casinum at which Gissing stayed during his¹ visit there in 1897. Here is a description of it:

"Here rose the walls of the citadel, within which Benedict had built his monastery. For some distance around these ancient rampants the ground was tilled, and flourishing with various crops. At the closed gateway of the old Arc, flanked by a tower, the monks rang, and were at once admitted into the courtyard, where in a few moments, the prior and all his brethren came forward to greet the strangers. Because of Basil's condition the ceremony usual on such arrivals was in his case curtailed; the prior uttered a brief prayer, gave the kiss of peace, and ordered forthwith the removal of the sick man to a guest-chamber, where he was laid in bed and ministered to by the brother Marcus, whose gifts as a healer were not less notable than his skill in poesy.....On the morrow, at noon, he was well enough to descend to the refectory, where he had a seat at the abbot's table. His meal consisted of a roast pigeon, a plate of vegetables, honey and grapes, with bread which seemed to him better than he had ever tasted, and wine whereof his still weak head bade him partake very modestly. The abbot's dinner, he saw, was much simpler; a bowl of milk, a slice of bread, and a couple of figs. After the kindly greeting with which he was received, there was no conversation, for a monk read aloud during the repast.

".....Going forth in the mellow sunshine, he turned his steps to a garden of vegetables where he saw monks at work. They gave him gentle greeting. When the time came, he was conducted

1. A similar description is to be found in By the Ionian Sea, p.58

at the Monastery of Lashan at which Giesing stayed during his

I

visit there in 1887. Here is a description of it:

"Here rose the walls of the citadel, within which Benedict

had built his monastery. For some distance around these ancient

remnants the ground was filled, and flourishing with various

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"...Going forth in the yellow sunshine, he turned his

steps to a garden of vegetables where he saw monks at work. They

gave him gentle greeting. When the time came, he was conducted

1. A similar description is to be found in By the Jordan Sea.

to the abbot's dwelling, which was the tower beside the ancient gateway of the Arc. It contained but two rooms, one above the other; below, the founder of the monastery studied and transacted business; in the upper chamber he prayed and slept."¹

J--Selections showing his attitude toward religion

"Already it was the habit of his mind to associate popular dogma with intellectual shallowness; herein, as at other points which fell within his scope, he had begun to scorn average people, and to pride himself intensely on views which he found generally condemned. Day by day he grew into a clearer understanding of the memories bequeathed to him by his father; he began to interpret remarks, details of behaviour, instances of wrath, which, though they had stamped themselves on his recollection, conveyed at the time no precise significance."²

And, "As a matter of course the boys accompanied their mother each Sunday morning to the parish church; and this ceremony was becoming an insufferable tax on Godwin's patience. It was not only that he hated the name of religion, and scorned with much fierceness all who came in sympathetic contact therewith; the loss of time seemed to him an oppressive injury, especially now that he began to suffer from restricted leisure. He would not refuse to obey his mother's wish, but the sullenness of his Sabbatic demeanour made the whole family uncomfortable. As often as possible he feigned illness. He tried the effect of dolorous sighs and groans, but Mrs. Peak could not dream of conceding a point which would have seemed to her the condonation of

1. Veranilda, p.259 (Dutton & Co. New York, 1905)

2. Born in Exile, p.47

to the upper dwelling, which was the tower beside the ancient gateway of the city. It contained but two rooms, one above the other; below, the tower of the monastery stood and transected the street; in the upper chamber he stayed and slept."

His education showing his attitude toward religion. "Already it was the habit of his mind to associate popular legends with intellectual shallowness; he was, as at other points which fell within his scope, he had begun to scorn average people and to prize himself immensely on views which he found generally condemned. Day by day he grew into a clearer understanding of the theories propounded to him by his father; he began to interpret remarks, details of behaviour, instances of waste, which though they had stamped themselves on his recollection, conveyed at the time no precise significance."

And, "As a matter of course the boys accompanied their mother each Sunday morning to the parish church; and this ceremony was becoming an intolerable vex to Gordon's patience. It was not only that he hated the name of religion, and scorned with much bitterness all who came in sympathetic contact therewith; the loss of time seemed to him an oppressive injury, especially now that he began to suffer from restricted leisure. He would not refuse to obey his mother's wish, but the solemnity of his Sabbath demeanour made the whole family uncomfortable. As often as possible he feigned illness. He tried the effect of choleraic signs and groans, but Mrs. Peak could not treat of conducting a point which would have seemed to her the condonation of

deadly sin. 'When I am a man !' muttered Godwin. 'Oh, when I
am a man !'¹

Workers in the Dawn was intended to be a vigorous attack upon certain features of religious and social life, in the former case, upon what the author termed 'the modern development of Ritualism.'² It appears that certain clergymen of the Church of England, caricatured in the person of Mr. Whiffle, had given just cause for offence. The following conversation between Arthur Golding and Mr. Venning shows clearly the author's attitude of mind:

"I know quite well, Mr. Venning,' replied Arthur, 'that you are a man of principle. Moreover, you are a religious man, and religion with you is more than a mere profession. It operates within your heart before it finds utterance upon your lips.'

"And yet, Mr. Golding,' pursued the old man, 'I think you hold my religion in but light esteem.'

"Only when it is a meaningless babble in the mouth of fools,' Arthur replied, 'Every real life-guide, whatever it calls itself, my conscience compels me to respect. How I wish I had had the strength to conceive and act up to a religion of my own.'³

The author's agnostic attitude was put into the mouth of Waymark:

"My own temperament,' Waymark went on, 'is, I suppose, exceptional, at all events among men who have an inner life. I

1. Born in Exile, p.47
2. Letters of George Gissing, p.73
3. Workers in the Dawn, p.89

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"My own temperament," Godwin went on, "is, I suppose,

questioned, at all events among men who have an inner life."

never knew what goes by the name of religious feeling; impulses of devotion, in the common sense of the phrase, have always been strange to me. I have known fear at the prospect of death; religious consolation, never. Sin, above all, has been a word without significance to me. As a boy it was so; it is so still, now that I am self-conscious. I have never been a deep student of philosophy, but the doctrine of philosophical necessity, the idea of Fate, is with me an instinct. I know that I could not have acted otherwise than I did in any juncture of my life; I know that the future is beyond my control. I shall do this, and avoid that, simply owing to a preponderance of motives, which I can gauge, but not control.¹"

K--Selections showing Gissing's love of nature

The following is a charming description of the rural landscape within the vicinity of Exeter, where he lived for three and a half years:²

"There amid tilth and pasture, gentle hills and leafy hollows of rural Devon, the eye rests and the mind is soothed. By lanes innumerable, deep between banks of fern and flower; by paths along the bramble-edge of scented meadows; by the secret windings of copse and brake and stream-worn valley--a way lies upward to the low ridge of Holdon, where breezes sing among the pines, or sweep rustling through gorse and bracken. Mile after mile of rustic loveliness, ever and anon the sea-limits blue beyond grassy slopes. White forms dozing beneath their thatch in harvest sunshine; hamlets forsaken save by women and children,

1. The Unclassed, Vol. 2, p.114
2. Letters of George Gissing, p.276

never know what goes by the name of religious feeling; I have
of devotion, in the common sense of the word, have always been
strange to me. I have known fear at the prospect of death;
religious consolation, never. Still, above all, has been a word
without significance to me. As a boy it was not; it is still
now that I am self-conscious. I have never been a deep student
of philosophy, but the doctrine of philosophical necessity, the
idea of Fate, is with me an instinct. I know that I could not
have acted otherwise than I did in any juncture of my life; I
know that the future is beyond my control. I shall do this,
and avoid that, simply owing to a preponderance of motives, which
I can gauge, but not control."

1--Reflections showing Gissing's love of nature
The following is a charming description of the rural land-
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a half years:

"There were little and pasture, gentle hills and leafy hol-
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fences innumerable, deep between banks of fern and flower; by
cattle along the breakable edge of scented meadows; by the secret
windings of copse and brake and stream-worn valley--a way lies
upward to the low ridge of Boldon, where presses and among the
plains, or sweep resting through gorges and bracken. Hills after
hills of rustic loveliness, ever and again the sea-limits blue
beyond grassy slopes. White farms dotting beneath their thatched
in harvest sunshine; harmless forsoeken save by women and children,

by dogs and cats and poultry, the labourers afield. Here grow the tall foxgloves, bending a purple head in the heat of noon; here the great bells of the convolvulus hang thick from lofty hedges, massing their pink and white against dark green leafage; here amid shadowed undergrowth trail the long fronds of lustrous harts-tongue; wherever the eye falls, profusion of summer's glory. Here, in many a nook carpeted with softest turf, canopied with tangle of leaf and bloom, solitude is safe from all intrusion--unless it be that of flitting bird, or of some timid wild thing that rustles for a moment and is gone. From dawn to midnight, as from midnight to dawn, one who would be alone with nature might count upon the security of these basks and dells.¹"

Certainly Gissing did more than see the scene pictured below:

"As they drove on to the bridge at Aysgarth, Piers Otway stood there awaiting them. They exchanged few words; the picture before their eyes, and the wild music that filled the air imposed silence. Headlong between its high banks plunged the swollen torrent, the roaring spate; brown from its washing of the peaty moorland, and churned into flying flakes of foam. Over the worn ledges, at other times a succession of little waterfalls, rolled in resistless fury a mighty cataract; at great rocks in mid-channel it leapt with surges like those of an angry sea. The spectacle was fascinating in its grandeur, appalling in its violence; with the broad leafage of the glen arched over it in warm, still sunshine, wondrously beautiful."²

1. In the Year of Jubilee, p.39
2. The Crown of Life, p.92

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arched over it in wave, still sunshine, wonderfully beautiful."

From the above evidence we have seen that Gissing makes use in Born in Exile of his college days at Owens College; of his trip to America and his experiences there in Workers in the Dawn and New Grub Street respectfully; of his studies in Germany and trend of thought in Workers in the Dawn; and of his poverty and his coaching in New Grub Street.

His struggles as a novelist, his purpose in writing--to depict life as it is--his difficulties in writing due to domestic worries, fatigued brain, lack of imagination, and inability to plot; his fear and hate of critics; his failure to produce the popular book of the time are seen in New Grub Street, The Unclassed, and Workers in the Dawn.

Echoes of his unhappy marriages are to be found in Workers in the Dawn, the Odd Women, The Year of Jubilee, Will Warburton, and New Grub Street. His chief view on marriage is given in New Grub Street when he says that unhappy marriages must be the outcome for the educated poor man since none but a poor, uneducated girl will venture to share his poverty.

Growing out of his marriage viewpoints are his beliefs in the emancipation of woman, and in The Emancipated, and The Odd Women he supports the rights of women.

His radicalism and hate of dogmatism he expresses in Born in Exile; and when Art takes their place he mentions the fact in The Unclassed.

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That education cannot benefit the masses, he points out in New Group Street, Isabel Clarendon, and in Thurs. And in

Demos and Workers in the Dawn, he expresses the belief that the poor, the uneducated, are as happy as the wealthy, the educated.

His hate of commercialism is to be found in The Crown of Life and in Demos, and in the former he draws his ideal business man.

In the same spirit in which he denounces commercialism, he gives his viewpoints on war and military things in general in Isobel Clarendon; and his thorough distaste for popular English 'sport' in the Crown of Life.

It is to be noted that his heroes are usually a replica of himself in personal appearance and character. They are usually unsociable, self-conscious, given to inward brooding, and are constantly in need of sympathy. They are intelligent, fond of books and of Hogarth's pictures, and incensed with the love of classics and classic ruins.

In Denzil Quarrier, The Nether World, Will Warburton, In the Year of Jubilee, and The Town Traveller there is little of autobiographical material used. The Nether World does, however, give a vivid picture of the environment with which Gissing was familiar at the time of writing. The other books were written at a time when the author was in more congenial surroundings. We may say that his earlier books are more autobiographical in tone than his later ones, that as his circumstances improved, and his cares became lighter, he was less inclined to draw upon his own experiences, and he dealt

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In Pencil Quarterly, The Nether World, Will Warburton, in the Year of Jubilee, and The Town Traveller there is little of autobiographical material used. The Nether World does, however, give a vivid picture of the environment with which Glasgow was familiar at the time of writing. The other books were written at a time when the author was in more congenial surroundings. We may say that his earlier books are more autobiographical in tone than his later ones, that as his circumstances improved, and his career became lighter, he was less inclined to draw upon his own experiences, and he dealt

with material in a lighter mood. We may conclude, however, that to a large extent his fiction is autobiographical in detail, and in spirit to an even greater extent. But it must not be forgotten that, considering his short term of life, his literary output is not in any sense small, and, therefore, the above conclusion concerning the degree to which his works are autobiographical is not surprising.

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